Strategies to Foster an Innovative Culture

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Institutions can set themselves up for long-term success by ensuring all key stakeholders are intimately involved in the process to make sure everyone is on-board and rowing in the same direction.Anderson University (S.C.) is a comprehensive university with a combination of professional and liberal arts programs serving about 3,500 students with a growing online population and a

residential emphasis on mobile and blended learning. For the past decade, the university has experienced record enrollments each fall, making the institution the fastest growing private university in South Carolina and the 18th fastest growing in the nation according to The Chronicle of Higher Education. Since 2010 Anderson has committed to being a leading innovator of educational improvement through the integration of cutting edge technology for blended on-campus and fully online students. For on-campus students, Anderson has provided all traditional undergraduate students with iPads and adopted the mission to transform the learning experience and prepare students to serve their families, communities, and careers in the twenty-first century. This approach to mobile learning has allowed for significant growth in blended learning experiences on the traditional campus with now 33 percent of a student's career at AU being spent in that environment. In the past several years, dozens of new online programs have been developed and deployed to meet market needs through innovative curricular and delivery methods. Subsequently, this growth has spurred Anderson's largest need yet for development of a robust program and faculty development plan to support the development of new courses and new faculty.

At the core of this shift has been the Center for Innovation and Digital Learning (CIDL), which has been key in scaling these initiatives and accolades such as "Most Innovative" and "Best Online Programs" by U.S. News and World Report and twice receiving Apple Distinguished School recognition. Empowering faculty and streamlining processes has been key in maintaining quality digital teaching and learning experiences.

The Center for Innovation and Digital Learning (CIDL) now lives in a new Office of Online Learning, Technology and Innovation. An arm of the Provost's office, the new office comprises the CIDL, a new unit dedicated to online and continuous learning, and Information Technology. Building on the work of the CIDL over the past five years, the new office is a hybridized approach to administration of online and blended learning, encouraging and incentivizing faculty to experiment and develop rather than mandating it. The CIDL's successes over the last five years have come with plenty of challenges—from incentivizing faculty engagement, growing the staff size from one instructional designer to six staff members, migrating to a new Learning Management System, and keeping up with growing regulatory and compliance requirements. Part of this was to ensure that there are faculty development incentives, support

personnel, the right technology, and a collaborative spirit, all of which are key pieces to an innovative culture, however.

Driving these changes has taken courageous senior leadership that recognizes the changing landscape of higher education and the need to remain competitive and on the cutting edge while ensuring faculty are the key drivers of this process. The aim of the digital learning and innovation initiative was not simply to provide our students and faculty members with technology, but to challenge them to rethink learning as a whole. As most educators know, the design of a learning environment and learning experience is a complex process. The faculty members at Anderson have met that challenge head-on and continue to innovate year after year. Through the professional development activities provided by the CIDL and supporting workshops and seminars facilitated across the institution, a growing body of professional learning experiences has engaged more and more faculty each year at the institution, which includes both full-time and part-time faculty members.

Part of keeping faculty at the center of the shift has been to embrace all members of the adoption spectrum as well as reach part-time and full-time faculty. While many early adopters began working with this initiative quickly, we needed to incorporate more low-stakes elements in our faculty development offerings, such as learning communities in addition to design institutes. Further, we had to ensure part-time faculty were adequately supported and incentivized to adopt innovative and digital teaching methods. This required moving onboarding to an online process and developing self-paced training for teaching and facilitating online and hybrid courses. As well, it requires making sure that part-time (and full-time) faculty have working iPads for our one-to-one initiative.

Part of the success of ensuring we reach faculty at all ends of the spectrum is that they may start with a seemingly small idea and then take it to drastically re-thinking their teaching and their students' learning experiences. One example is a science professor who wanted to initially create flashcards on her iPad and ended up changing the way the entire science department conducts lecture classes and lab experiences with digital tools and innovative approaches.

As part of this digital learning initiative, Anderson regularly collects, analyzes and makes use of data for continuous improvement. The CIDL works across the institution to analyze institutional data and design assessments that measure both the impact of this initiative as a whole and narrowly focused research

projects. Institutional data is collected on a routine schedule as part of this initiative. Surveys developed by the CIDL are also collected and analyzed on a biannual basis. The survey data informs the institution of trends in how students are using their mobile devices and what aspects should be targeted for future professional development experiences.

Anderson University has experienced tremendous growth. Since 2002, enrollment has more than doubled. Since the beginning of this initiative, growth has been steady, and we believe that part of that growth is directly attributable to this initiative and to the institution's commitment to be a leading technological university. Developing an innovative campus culture requires careful planning and evaluation, and it begins with support from senior leaders and is sustained by those on the front lines who are well supported and equipped to make shifts in their teaching and learning in ways that are relevant to the modern student and most importantly, supports student success.

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