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An Equitable Approach to Academic Progression Advising: To Use an Automated Tool or Not?

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Abstract

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is concerned with the problem of inequitable access to an automated degree audit tool at a large metropolitan university in central Canada, which is affecting year-to-year progression and timely graduation. Despite the implementation of this tool 17 years ago, it has not been fully adopted, leaving the campus community to navigate degree progression inconsistently and in isolation, with nearly half the students underserved; of particular concern are first-generation students. Stakeholder theory underpins the organizational change management plan, which espouses authentic, transformational, and shared leadership approaches. Following internal and external analyses, it was determined that the institution has the capacity and readiness for change. Using an interpretive paradigm to consider multiple perspectives, four possible solutions are considered. After assessing time, finances, human resources, and impact, the preferred solution is to implement an incremental working group. An inclusive and comprehensive change model and an iterative review cycle comprising immediate and ongoing monitoring and evaluation is proposed for effective implementation. As well, strategic communication for equitable access to information sharing needed for degree progression will enhance the overall student experience and improve administrative efficiencies. The execution of a five-stage change plan will see all academic advisors using the automated degree audit tool by 2025. Successful implementation of this OIP will allow for exploration of other initiatives to improve the student experience using technology and a social justice lens in leadership.

Keywords: degree progression, first-generation students, organizational change, university, authentic, transformational and shared leadership

Executive Summary

The Problem of Practice (PoP) embedded in this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is for a senior administrative leader in a Registrar's Office (RO) to address the lack of a strategic implementation of an automated degree audit tool for students to use regarding their academic progression. According to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (2006), an automated degree audit tool will show the student and staff how much the student has accomplished and how many courses a student has left to complete. OntarioU (a pseudonym), is a large metropolitan university and provides the organizational context for this OIP. At OntarioU, an automated degree audit tool was built in 2005 for students studying in a single major, which comprised 96% of the student population at that time. Single majors still comprise approximately 96% of the student population, yet 17 years after implementing the degree audit tool, fewer than half of the 11 faculties are using it. An automated degree audit tool allows students real-time access to their own degree information, whenever they need it or want it. Given the correlation between student satisfaction levels and graduation rates (Kuh, 2009), a positive side effect to using the automated degree audit tool will be increased retention and graduation rates (Cellotti et al., 2020) at OntarioU, something that all staff have a vested interest in making a reality.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the organizational context. OntarioU's mission has focused, almost since its inception, on access: access for students from a wide variety of backgrounds so that a postsecondary education can become a reality. With a large number of first-generation students in attendance, student services have been a focal point in OntarioU's academic and strategic plans, resulting in service excellence as a priority. One of the ways that service excellence can be accomplished is through the use of technology to provide services to students

when needed and wanted, rather than putting students in situations where they need to connect with individual staff from various departments depending on the nature of their inquiry. Serving as the Associate Registrar & Director, Student Records & Scheduling, I have agency to initiate change. My position holds responsibility for reviewing all student applications for graduation, and the method that is used for assessment of eligibility is the degree audit tool. Not only can I initiate change through my positional agency, but also I have the opportunity to tie this important work to institutional mission, vision, values, and critical institutional documents such as the university academic plan and strategic plans (OntarioU, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c).

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) is the overarching theoretical framework of this OIP. Using transformational (Shields, 2010), authentic (Walumbwa et al., 2008), and shared (Kezar, 2018) leadership approaches, I intend to move this change forward, whereby the entire advising community is using the automated degree audit tool by 2025. The sheer volume of staff who will be impacted by this OIP provides the impetus for using shared leadership and is aligned with the theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). Using an interpretive paradigm will allow me to understand that a diversity in opinions and perspectives will exist given the variety of experiences staff have had related to the degree audit tool. Framing the PoP will incorporate Bolman and Deal’s (2017) four-frame model. I pay particular attention to the political frame, with supporting information from Manning (2018), due to the shared accountability budgeting model in place at OntarioU.

In Chapter 2, I explore four solutions: maintaining the status quo, decentralizing the degree audit responsibility, waiting for a new student system, and using the incremental working group (WG) approach. An analysis of each choice is provided using time, human, and financial resources as evaluative sources. The recommended solution is the incremental WG approach.

The change model that will be utilized in executing the recommended solution will be Kotter's (2012) eight-step model in conjunction with Purokuru and Nauheimer's (as cited in Buller, 2015) change journey map. Kotter's change model will be followed in a linear manner for Steps 1, 2, and 3; I envision that Steps 4, 5, and 6 will be fluid, and will work in conjunction with the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) evaluation model (Moen & Norman, 2009); returning to a linear progression for Steps 7 and 8. Kotter's change model has been successful for me in the past, and in my estimation, it will be a good fit for OntarioU. A critical organizational analysis is conducted, demonstrating that current academic advising practices related to degree progression are incongruent with the theoretical advising model in place at OntarioU. The literature speaks primarily about two advising models: developmental and prescriptive or transactional. OntarioU has committed to a developmental model, which speaks to creating opportunities for students to learn and problem-solve on their own.

In Chapter 3, the change plan is outlined in the following five stages: (a) set the stage, (b) gather input, (c) establish an implementation plan and timelines, (d) provide training and support, and (e) incorporate feedback. The resources used to monitor progress and evaluate goal completion will include a series of focus groups, surveys, regular meetings with academic advisors, and the WG, combined with quantitative data. Critical to the execution of this OIP is ensuring that the campus community understands the inequitable access issue that students currently face with regard to the automated degree audit tool. Communications will keep the social justice issue of equity at their core. Next steps will be to execute on the change plan, which I foresee taking 30 months to complete. Given the focus on equity in this OIP, I would like to continue finding opportunities to provide staff development in social justice (Theoharis, 2007).

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Acronyms

HE (Higher Education)

HEIs (Higher Education Institutions)

NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act)

PESTE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, and Environmental)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

RO (Registrar's Office)

SMAs (Strategic Mandate Agreements)

SIS (Student Information System)

WG (Working Group)

Definitions

Authentic leadership: A pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon a positive ethical climate to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, promoting positive self-development (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Automated Degree Audit Tool: A tool that uses computer software to show a student or a staff member how many courses a student has completed towards their degree requirements and how many courses they have left to complete (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 2006).

First-generation learners: Students whose parents or guardians did not attend college or university (Kuh, 2009).

Neoliberalism: A political approach that favours free-market capitalism and a reduction in government spending; all conduct is economic conduct, and all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics (W. Brown, 2015).

Performance-based funding: A funding approach whereby government funding provided to universities is based on their performance on certain metrics (Spooner, 2019).

Shared leadership: Involves agents at the top and bottom of the campus hierarchy working together to create change (Kezar, 2018).

Stakeholder theory: Engaging those individuals or groups who have a stake in the activities that make up the organization or business; it is an executive’s job to manage those relationships to create as much value as possible for stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010).

Strategic mandate agreements: A key component of the accountability framework for postsecondary education in Ontario, these agreements outline provincial government objectives and priority areas for the postsecondary sector (Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 2021).

Sustainable Development Goals: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, n.d.-b), adopted in 2015, includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The goals are an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing, in global partnership—to recognize that ending poverty must work in conjunction with goals that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth (United Nations, n.d.-a).

Transformational leadership: The process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2019); elevating motives and values of followers to unite in pursuit of higher goals (Burns, 1978) with a focus on process and outcomes (Shields, 2010).

Transformative leadership: Involves deconstructing structures and policies that perpetuate inequities (Shields, 2010).

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem

Many challenges face higher education (HE) today, including dwindling resources, an increase in student numbers, rapid technological advancements, high tuition resulting in overwhelming student debt, and, perhaps most disconcerting, the loss of public confidence in the ability and willingness of higher education institutions (HEIs) to achieve the educational outcomes they claim (Basham, 2012; Black, 2015; Manning, 2018; Whitt et al., 2008). Due to increasing financial pressures, HEIs are becoming increasingly complicated organizations to work within. The greater context that HE is operating within is that of neoliberalism (W. Brown, 2015). Neoliberalism has led to a corporate culture being embedded and espoused within HE (W. Brown, 2015). This corporate culture has manifested itself within HEIs in managerial policies and an emphasis on businesslike strategies to budgetary oversight. Education is still seen as a necessity (Dewey, 1916/2011), notwithstanding the context within which HE operates in our global world today.

Coinciding with these external drivers and neoliberal undertones, HEIs are also experiencing massive competition for students domestically and within international markets (Giambona et al., 2017). These neoliberal, external drivers (e.g., government oversight, increased tuition fees, and public accountability) are responsible for some of the change that has occurred and is still occurring in HE. In the midst of neoliberalism and external forces is the undergraduate student. The student experience is a critical component and one of the selling features to prospective students about where they choose to attend (Nixon et al., 2018) and invest their time, effort, and resources for their postsecondary education.

In this plan I discuss OntarioU’s organizational context and the interpretivist theoretical framework that has guided my writing. In the next section, I summarize my transformational and authentic leadership approaches, agency, and lens, and then I share my leadership Problem of Practice (PoP). In the following sections, I frame the PoP, outline questions emerging from the PoP, outline my leadership-focused vision for change, and then conclude with my perception of the organization's readiness for change.

Organizational Context

In this section I describe the context and culture that exists at OntarioU. Within this context, I share the institutional mission, vision, and values that underpin all the strategic planning documents that are in place.

Context and Culture

Each institution has a unique organizational context and culture (Manning, 2018; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). Before embarking on a change initiative, the first and perhaps most important thing to do, as Whitt et al. (2008) so aptly declared, is to learn and know the organizational context, institutional mission, and culture. In the Canadian context, some HEIs are classified as primarily research focused, with medical and doctoral programs; a comprehensive group includes a modest research portfolio; and the remaining institutions are considered primarily undergraduate (Dwyer, 2021). OntarioU (a pseudonym) serves over 55,000 students annually and is situated in the comprehensive group, with a modest research portfolio (Dwyer, 2021). Most students are commuting to OntarioU from a sizeable metropolitan area. OntarioU prides itself on being an institution of access: 26% of its student body are first-generation learners and 77% of students access some form of government financial assistance (Director, Student Life, personal communication, September 8, 2020) through the Ontario Student Assistance Program. "Access" is the institutional mission and mantra that has survived many strategic plans (OntarioU, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Access can be defined in so many ways, such as increasing seats to serve more students or changing admission requirements so that underrepresented groups can access certain programs. My perception is that access at OntarioU means access for students who may be disadvantaged from attending a postsecondary institution. To achieve this mission, OntarioU must develop and deliver student services that break through obstacles preventing students from accessing a university education.

Breaking through obstacles means that student service programs are developed in such a way to match the demographics of the student body which OntarioU attracts and serves. First-generation learners (those who do not have parents who attended postsecondary) spend more time per week working in part-time employment compared to their peers, a fact believed to adversely affect their academic growth and success during their postsecondary studies (Kuh, 2009; Ishitani, 2016). Due to increased responsibilities outside of the classroom, first-generation students tend to have less time to focus on their academic pursuits. The student services that these students may need could look much different from the student service suite that non-first-generation learners will need. The cultural context at OntarioU, which is reflected in the mission, vision, and values, is one of creating opportunities for students to access HE and to have all the necessary supports while they are navigating their way through their education journey.

OntarioU was built on the structural pillar of providing access to students who have been typically underrepresented in postsecondary education. Given that 26% of students at OntarioU are first-generation learners and that over 77% are on government financial assistance (Director, Student Life, personal communication, September 8, 2020), access plays out in such services as robust student financial aid packages and vast coffers of emergency bursary funds. The theme of access has continued to thrive at OntarioU as a foundational pillar even today. The newest version of the university academic plan, for 2020–2025, sets out moving from access to success

(OntarioU, n. d.-b) as one of the strategic priorities. Providing access has provided a catalyst for a strong commitment at the institution to principles of service excellence (OntarioU, n.d.-c). This theme of access allows students the ability to select from a wide variety of degree programs, offered by 11 different faculties, that will result in either a 3-year degree or a 4-year honours degree program.

Providing additional cultural and social context, these degree programs are delivered within a strong unionized culture in both the support staff (nonmanagement) arena and faculty association. The faculty union has been active and vocally challenging about administrative processes, budgeting processes, and leadership decisions. Anecdotally, this strong union presence is evidenced by the heated discussions that have taken place through university governance, and the faculty have voted to support strike action on numerous occasions. There is a bicameral governance structure in place at OntarioU. The Senate is responsible for all academic matters and the Board of Governors is responsible for financial matters.

Institutional Mission, Vision, and Values

Further organizational context can be provided in the mission, vision, and values that are espoused at OntarioU. Part of the current mission is phrased to promote the creation of positive change (OntarioU, n.d.-b). The institutional vision commits to giving a broad demographic of students access to a high-quality, research-intensive learning environment committed to the public good (OntarioU, n.d.-b). The institutional values are listed as excellence, progressiveness, diversity and inclusivity, equity and social justice, and sustainability (OntarioU, n.d.-b). The vision and values are the foundational pieces that inform the university academic plan and all the strategic plans from the various faculties and service areas that comprise the institution. The vision and values summarize its aspirations using a critical lens in leadership style that has social justice as a goal. Social justice and equity lend themselves to a transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2010), one that wants to break down oppressive or inequitable systems and barriers for students.

Political context can be observed in the looming threat of provincial performance-based metrics (Friesen, 2020) through Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs), which reflect a strong neoliberal undertone in the way society views HEIs. Performance-based metrics tie government funding and state objectives to specific, measurable HE outcomes (Drumm, 2000; Spooner, 2019). Underlying this approach is the belief that when funding is contingent on performance, legislators and the public are better able to identify state and institutional priorities and calculate the return on investment for taxpayers (S. G. Klein, 2015). Performance-based metrics are outlined in SMAs; they define and set out the expectations of HEIs from the provincial government. If the Ontario SMA follows suit to other jurisdictions, retention and graduation statistics will be two of the metrics upon which HEIs will be measured (Bexley, 2019; Kelchen, 2020).

These agreements may also change the economic context of OntarioU given that funding may be tied to specific metrics. The economic context changed at OntarioU in 2017, when the university made a shift towards a shared accountability and resource planning budgeting model. The basic premise of this new model is to ensure that resource allocation to faculties is assessed based on the revenues they generate (grant and tuition income) while university-wide expenses are charged back in a transparent and repeatable manner (OntarioU, n.d.-d). The implementation of this budgeting model was quite contentious. One of the premises of this budgeting model is the notion of shared service costs (OntarioU, n.d.-d) which are administered centrally but paid for by the faculties.

This broader context shapes the organization through the way the leadership evolves and the way OntarioU operates. It affects how I lead within the institution and the various components that I need to be aware of prior to embarking on change. The shared budgeting model allows the academy to be much more involved in the composition, delivery, and evaluation of the central student service suite given that they see themselves as essentially paying for those services to be delivered. One of the central services that is offered is an automated degree audit tool. The degree audit tool, designed for staff (and its partner, the degree progress report, designed for students), is a homegrown software product that outlines all degree and program requirements and will correctly assess progress towards the degree (Lauren, 2006). With a few exceptions, student applications to graduate, using the degree audit tool, are processed centrally within the Registrar's Office (RO) rather than being managed within the faculties. Only a handful of faculties are using the automated and centrally supported degree audit tool generated through the Student Information System (SIS) when they counsel students or reference student progress. Most faculties are using their own system, and in most cases, they use manual methods to assist students with advising related to academic progression and meeting graduation requirements.

There have never been agreed-upon terms for service-level agreements between faculties and central service delivery units. The fact that no service-level agreements are in place on campus adds an interesting dynamic to the perceptions that all stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, and community members) have about service expectations and delivery. Another observation with regard to student services at OntarioU is that services are not delineated as clearly within the faculty or clearly embedded in the central suite. Service-level agreements could help to mitigate any confusion and clearly define what services belong where and what expectations should accompany them.

Given the size and complexity of OntarioU, I have employed stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) as the theoretical framework in this OIP. Freeman (1984) defined a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of the activities of an organization” (p. 178). Given the number of staff at OntarioU who are involved in advising students, I determined that stakeholder theory would be best to provide the overarching guiding framework to this OIP. The theoretical framework needed to be mindful and respectful of the numerous staff who would be involved; the size and complexity of the university were added layers of consideration. In addition to these features of OntarioU, I have been told repeatedly, since I started my job, that OntarioU has a unique culture. I am slowly discovering that departments within a faculty may have their own subculture that is truly distinctive and separate from their parent one. All of these nuances combined led me to search out a theoretical framework that would cast the widest net and provide a foundation of collaboration and collegiality to work with. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) provided a frame to operate from the guiding principles of collaboration and collegiality. As well, stakeholder theory is aligned with my authentic and transformational leadership position, lens, and approaches, which I discuss in the next section.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

In this section I discuss my agency, positionality, and role to effect change. I share some ethical underpinnings that inform my leadership and then articulate my leadership approach: authentic and transformational leadership.

Agency and Positionality

My student experiences inform the areas that I am passionate about as an employee within HE. I am a first-generation learner and come from a working-class family where every penny mattered and counted. I did not have loved ones who could assist me in navigating the various administrative structures, nor was I familiar with the language that is so often used in HE that we as staff think is easy to understand. Personally, I found that not having loved ones who could guide me through the admissions process, the bureaucracy of HE, and then the foray of student services made these aspects overwhelming and daunting parts of my postsecondary journey. The student experience and executing on service excellence for students are therefore very near and dear to my heart as an employee within HE. I have spent my entire 25-year career in HE administrative service areas (15 of those years in leadership roles). Defining and delivering a suite of stellar student services has always brought me great joy.

Within the Division of Students, I have been working as the associate registrar and director of student records and scheduling at OntarioU for the past 18 months and report directly to the registrar. In this role, I lead a team of 38 staff (four of whom are managers). I am responsible for ensuring smooth operations in curriculum, degree audit, records, and scheduling. The curriculum team is responsible for how the university updates and maintains courses and programs; the scheduling team coordinates the timing of all academic classes for the university; the records team is responsible for grades, transcripts, and academic standing for students; and the degree audit team is responsible for reviewing and approving the eligibility of undergraduate students who have applied for graduation. Please see Appendix A for an organizational chart of the RO at OntarioU. I have sought to build strong relationships internally with other registrarial teams and with campus partners. I have been continually seeking to make improvements to enhance the staff and, more important, student experience. These responsibilities provide me with the keys and agency to affect change related to my OIP. I will be the champion, change agent, and leader in the potential change process.

On the degree audit team, the method of assessing student progress towards graduation is the degree audit tool. The degree audit tool has a partner on the student side and is referred to as the degree progress report; 96% of undergraduate students have access to their report. For the student, this technology allows them to track their academic progression throughout their undergraduate journey in an up-to-the-minute fashion. For the degree audit team staff, the degree audit tool can be updated or amended with transfer credit (when a student completes a course at another HEI, and they wish to use those credits at OntarioU) or course exemptions at any time, and therefore update a student's degree progress report in a timely fashion. If staff throughout the faculties are not using the tool as the student is proceeding through their program requirements, all of the updating and reconciling of the academic journey needs to be finalized at the point of graduation. This process is inefficient and not student friendly, as without continual updates, the degree progress report is not an accurate reflection of a student's coursework. This part of my portfolio has surfaced the largest inequity for students that I have the agency to address in our student service suite.

Faculties and academic advisors across campus at OntarioU are responsible and accountable for assisting students with questions related to degree requirements and their academic progression. Academic staff and faculty academic advisors interact with students far more frequently on the topic of degree progression than employees in any central unit. Students seek out our faculty partners throughout their journey to check in on their own degree progression and requirements that are outstanding. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that students have access to accurate information when they need it. Staff on the degree audit team are constantly interacting with our faculty partners to troubleshoot and update the degree audit tool. It would be more meaningful, and a better experience, if all staff (including academic and faculty advisors) were using the degree audit tool given that the students are using it to generate their progress reports at incredible rates. In 2016, our internal reporting data demonstrated that over 22,000 students were using the tool. At the same time, a little over half of the staff on campus were not, and are still not, using the tool at all. Having an ethical underpinning will be complementary to my leadership approaches, and I am hopeful that increasing the usage of the degree audit tool can occur.

Ethical Underpinnings

Regardless of the approach that I take to leadership, it will be informed by an ethical foundation. I hold myself to exacting standards and have an intense moral code. This disposition may come from my avocation of officiating, where it is an imperative that officials are always held to an ethical standard of behaviour and where rules and regulations are the conditions to which they must comply. I officiate two different sports (one at the national level and one at the international level). To succeed in the competitive sports arena, it is essential to have an uncompromising and unwavering sense of integrity.

In consideration of the larger global context of neoliberalism, effective, ethical leadership becomes critical with the increase of performance-driven accountability (Ehrich et al., 2015). Although this performance-based funding model has been delayed by the Ontario provincial government (Friesen, 2020), these metrics are impending and looming. Now, more than ever, with increased public scrutiny (Chatfield, 2017; Mathuews & Pulcini, 2017; Zarkesh & Beas,

2004) there is a need to operate ethically regardless of the leadership approach that one may choose to employ.

I see great value in ensuring that my leadership approach, actions, and philosophy are informed by a strong ethical foundation. Burnes and By (2012) argued that leaders cannot achieve sustainable and beneficial change for their organization unless they act in an ethical fashion. I see this view as extremely well suited to who I am as a person and who I have evolved into as a leader. Burnes and By also discussed the need for leaders to adopt ethical approaches to change that will elicit utilitarian outcomes in terms of the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders. This piece of Burnes and By’s work is what they referred to as *utilitarian consequentialism*: “an action is ethically right if it maximizes the beneficial consequences for everyone, including the instigator” (2012, p. 245). Ciulla (2004), in her book about ethical leadership, spoke about a shared vision of the good. I was drawn to this ethical foundation not just from a personal standpoint, but also because I see it as a great fit for my theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). Any change should aspire to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number while incorporating and engaging as many stakeholders as possible during the process.

Leadership Approach

In conjunction with the ethical foundation, my approach or philosophy to leadership is transformational and authentic. The transformational leadership approach matches the challenges of a changing sector (globalization) to better enable creative solutions to meet those challenges (Black, 2015). The transformational approach has a focus on transforming or changing something (Shields, 2010) and will assist in the pursuit of potential outcomes related to my OIP. Before diving into this section, it would be prudent to describe the differences between transformative and transformational leadership approaches given their similar focus on transforming or changing something (Shields, 2010) and given that I perceive OntarioU to have a transformative leadership approach.

Transformative and transformational leaders have equity and social justice at their core; the difference lies in the expected outcomes (Shields, 2010). Both models have their roots in Freire's (1970) work, which I draw upon later in this OIP. Shields (2010) distinguished between transformational leadership, with a focus on improving organizational qualities and effectiveness, and transformative leadership, which challenges inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice. The focus on power and privilege in the transformative approach links education and educational leadership to the wider social context in which they are embedded (Shields, 2010). Transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and align the followers' objectives and goals with the larger organization (Bass, 1990; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). My OIP addresses the inequity of access to a consistent degree audit advising tool. Achieving equitable access to an automated degree tracking tool for students aligns with divisional goals (Vice-Provost Students, personal communication, August 16, 2021) and the larger university academic plan (OntarioU, n.d.-b).

In conjunction with the transformational approach is authenticity. The authentic leadership approach speaks closely to who I am as an individual. Authenticity involves being true to oneself and relying on internal values and standards (Kets de Vries & Cheak-Baillargeon, 2015; Swain et al., 2018). In every leadership position that I have occupied, I have always been aware of why I was doing what I was doing and lived up to my values. Authenticity is also seen as an enhancement and a complement to transformational leadership as it ensures that such leadership is genuine (Gardner & Carlson, 2015). I rely on Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) definition of authentic leadership “as a pattern of leader behavior... that fosters greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders with followers” (p. 94). This definition resonated with me as I tend to be quite self-reflective in my pursuit of being self-aware.

The internalized moral perspective is demonstrated through consistent behaviours based on character and values (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Authentic leaders have an inner drive to demonstrate congruence between their values and actions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). I am hopeful that my consistent demonstration of authentic leadership will allow me to earn the trust of colleagues to begin conversations and dialogue about bringing change to a critical aspect to our student service suite.

Another aspect to authentic leadership that will be critical to addressing my PoP is the balanced processing of information. The balanced processing of information “refers to leaders who show that they objectively analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision” (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 95). The balanced processing of information will be helpful to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted and heard. Being able to listen to different perspectives that are brought forward is in alignment with the theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) and will be pivotal to getting to a better place and to implementing change. I expect to encounter many different opinions of the degree audit tool and reasons why some staff still prefer to use their manual processes. There are likely some valuable insights that colleagues have to share which can inform the journey of achieving this automated functionality for students.

The last piece to authentic leadership is relational transparency. Another area that resonates strongly with who I am as a person, relational transparency is defined as “presenting one's authentic self (as opposed to a fake or distorted self) to others" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 95). I refer again to my officiating background in reference to relationship transparency. I have enjoyed tremendous opportunities to officiate at the international level that would not have been possible had it not been for being true to myself in every interaction, in every game, with every player and coach. I could ill-afford to have participants feel that they were dealing with someone who was distorting themselves in their interactions. Genuine interactions with others have been a cornerstone to my success in my avocations, and I bring this desire for authentic connections with colleagues into my professional context. It is my assessment that the transformational and authentic approaches to leadership are aligned with the theoretical framework that I have chosen to contextualize my OIP—stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010)—and are an excellent fit to work towards addressing my PoP.

Leadership Problem of Practice

Student services suites are defined and implemented in a variety of ways from one institution to another. In my 25 years of working in HE, a thread common amongst institutions is a drive to score or rank higher than their competitor HEIs. Institutional rankings can position an institution in a more desirable light than its counterparts; for example, *Maclean's* magazine's annual issue of national university rankings (Maclean's, 2021) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; n.d.-b). Student services are a common part of the institutional ranking process and form part of the eventual method for scoring. Kuh (2009) has done much research on student engagement and HE service delivery, noting that stellar student services can increase student engagement. A student who is highly engaged in their campus community is far more likely to achieve success (Kuh, 2009; NSSE, n.d.-a). In this context, success would be defined as progressing through their program and eventually graduating with a credential from the original institution of admission. It is not unusual for HEIs to see a correlation between high levels of student satisfaction with student services and high graduation rates (Kuh, 2009).

Within my context and given the budgeting model that exists, academic faculties drive the academic mission of OntarioU while also informing how administrators should best carry out their expectations of student service delivery. With regard to degree audit, the central RO team develops and maintains the tool itself and conducts the reviews to determine student eligibility for graduation. Eleven faculties across campus at OntarioU are responsible and accountable for advising students on their degree progression.

A wide variety of service models exist at OntarioU as they relate to advising for academic progression. One of the issues that has surfaced is that students have inconsistent access to advisors who are able to assist with academic progression due to the size and complexity of faculty structures. In addition to access, over half the advisors across campus are consistently using a paper method of advising students, which does not match the degree progress report that students are accessing and using. OntarioU has a diverse student body (NSSE, 2020) and prides itself on having a strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Universities that are committed to equity, access, and participation are typically also committed to providing the broadest possible range of student services and activities, to continue to attract and retain a capable, diverse student cohort (Buultjens & Robinson, 2011). As a senior level administrator responsible for the degree audit tool, the PoP under investigation is the need to address the lack of a strategic approach to advising students for academic progression in an effort to enhance the student experience. Academic progression, for the purposes of this OIP, is the journey a student takes through their undergraduate degree. I now turn my attention to framing the PoP.

Framing the Problem of Practice

I frame the PoP using Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames. I also outline the political, economic, social, technological, and environmental (PESTE) contexts that OntarioU operates within. I incorporate the interpretive paradigm into my analysis and share information about the culture at OntarioU. Understanding the cultural context and the political frame at OntarioU will be invaluable as my OIP unfolds. Finally, a macro-meso-micro analysis is provided for further framing of the problem.

Four Frames Analysis

Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames are structural, human resources, political, and symbolic; they provide different lenses in order to better understand an institution or organization. Using these four frames provides a depth of understanding of the OntarioU context. The four frames provide greater perspective on what one may change (the product) and how to go about changing it (the process; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Additional analytical information and greater perspective are essential considerations for a change agent prior to embarking on a change effort. For these reasons, employing, exploring, and researching all four frames at OntarioU was critical to garner a more robust understanding of the context.

The structural frame emphasizes organizational architecture, which includes planning, goals, rules, policies, procedures, technology, roles, metrics, and rubrics (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The 11 faculties at OntarioU that are responsible and accountable for advising have different structures, roles, and reporting lines. These are all structural pieces that will be important for me to understand as change progresses because they already exist, and as full implementation and use of the automated degree audit tool occurs, some of these structural pieces may have to evolve. The human resources frame is particularly useful in that its primary focus is on people and relationships, “finding ways for people to get their work done while feeling good about themselves and their work” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 17). The political frame from Bolman and Deal is particularly relevant and critical to the OntarioU context as it speaks to power, competition, bargaining, negotiation, and scarce resources. Given the shared accountability budgeting model in place at OntarioU, the political frame will be the most useful frame to situate and contextualize the problem. The symbolic frame is relevant in that it “depicts organizations as cultures propelled by rituals, stories and myths” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 18). Anecdotally, many staff at OntarioU have been in their positions for numerous years, coming up as work study students and then becoming full-time employees for their career. Although much of the work done by advisors and staff is vested in structural pieces such as rules and policies, a number of processes are based on historical ways of doing things and comfort, similar to Bolman and Deal’s (2017) reference to the concept of rituals. Overall, I see the analysis of OntarioU through Bolman and Deal’s four frames fitting well with the overall theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) in that there is a focus on people throughout their writing.

PESTE Analysis

The political implications of this OIP are multifaceted. The first level is provincial, including the provincial government (in the form of SMAs) and the determination of what will be measured for funding and what will not. The second level is municipal and includes the local needs of businesses who wish to hire OntarioU graduates. The third level is institutional, the university-level politics at OntarioU, which include the way money and resources are allocated. Economically, Ontario has a plethora of choice for where students can attend postsecondary, so competition can be fierce for tuition revenue.

Socially, it is problematic for students in some faculties to have access to an automated degree tracking tool and others, in differing faculties, not. Social media has been the venue for students to express their discontent over the variance in their student experiences related to degree progression advising and the inconsistent access or availability of staff to speak to about their requirements. Not surprisingly, students find it odd that some students can access this kind of automation and others cannot.

Technologically, OntarioU is undergoing a new SIS implementation that is targeted for completion in 2025. The change in records management tool will provide OntarioU with many opportunities, including being a pioneer among local HEIs in using this new system. Yet, to solidify its importance, an automated degree tracker tool, similar to our current degree audit tool/degree progress report, is on the roadmap for the new systems project, and this planned implementation is an important piece to contextualize where the institution is headed.

The environmental context is one where I perceive that this OIP can assist with the institutional goal of adhering to the United Nations' (n.d.-a) Sustainable Development Goals, which underpin the university's academic plan (OntarioU, n.d.-b). Using an automated tool for advising and degree progression decreases the need to print out manual, hard copies of other independently supported tools that are currently being used around campus.

Interpretive Paradigm

Paradigm, as Morgan (1980) defined it, "is a complete view of reality or way of seeing" (p. 606). The interpretive paradigm arose as a response to the excesses of scientific social science; it recognizes that knowledge of the world is always conditioned by one's experiences and culture (Hein, 2017). The interpretive paradigm is intertwined with social constructivism and is benefitted by the Bolman and Deal (2017) four-frame analysis. A deeper understanding of

OntarioU through the four-frame analysis does not mean that all staff will have the same view; rather, their unique perspectives are addressed through the interpretive paradigm (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Additionally, Cohen and Manion (1994) outlined that an interpretive/social constructionist approach is used to really understand the human experience. Mertens (2005) and Burrell and Morgan (2005) shared that reality is socially constructed. These concepts are pivotal for my work in this OIP, as every staff member will have their own unique, individual view and experience of student services and the way they should ideally be delivered.

Students will have their own views on service, however, and they “need to be able to access a wide range of resources across an unfamiliar and often daunting university culture” (Buultjens & Robinson, 2011, p. 338). Given that there are approximately 50 staff, reporting into 11 different faculty structures, across the campus who are engaged in advising students about degree progression, the interpretive paradigm is well suited to this OIP. This group of over 50 staff may have their own definition of service and its quality, which will influence conversations pertaining to processes and methods of improvement. Having common definitions will be crucial to ensure a shared understanding to address how to provide services to students (Buultjens & Robinson, 2011). Student service professionals must “underscore the importance of holistic development, attention to individual differences, creation of supportive environments, context, and student agency” (Evans & Reason, 2001, p. 369). All staff who are involved in academic advising may have different definitions of a supportive environment and how the environment should be structured. The interpretive paradigm allows for subjectivity, socially constructed reality, and the “intersubjectivity of shared meanings” (Burrell & Morgan, 2005, p. 28). The interpretive paradigm allows for understanding that “we construct our knowledge of the world, which is filtered and shaped by our interpretive tools like language and culture” (Hein, 2017, p.

3). Critical to the implementation of any solution that the investigation of this OIP may bring about will be the particular context, which interpretivism also looks to understand (Hein, 2017).

Importance of Understanding Culture and the Political Frame

I have been repeatedly told by colleagues that OntarioU has a unique culture. Faculty and staff unions are strong, vocal, and actively engaged in campus activities. Over the course of my inaugural year in my position at OntarioU, I saw the uniqueness of its culture. I would describe the culture at OntarioU as being patriarchal. Administratively, some student services have been designed to guide the students through their journey rather than allowing a self-serve method. An example would be that students require an appointment with an advisor prior to registering for courses. In my experience in previous HE work settings, when the student population is over 45,000, there tends to be more of a hands-off, student-led approach. In addition to this observation, there is a pervasive care and desire to support students in whatever ways are necessary for them to succeed. A patriarchal approach combined with a keen sense of care are the key pieces of the OntarioU culture that I have observed. In addition, there are unique subcultures which operate at the faculty and department levels. Understanding the institutional culture will be critical to the eventual implementation of plans for my OIP. Schein (1996) defined culture as a concept of shared norms, values, and assumptions. I know that I will need to be cognizant of the cultures and subcultures at OntarioU in order to see changes through.

Kezar (2018) suggested that “no other theory of change focuses on context as culture theories do” (p. 58), and I do see this as a pivotal component for my work to be successful. I am keenly aware that being sensitive to culture and context will help me to be successful in the implementation of any change initiatives related to my OIP . Being attentive to the unique culture and subcultures at OntarioU will increase my ability to be successful in change planning, implementation, and measuring success. I will be cognizant of what Whitt et al. (2008) described as the necessity to recognize institutional culture as paramount to success. In addition to understanding the importance of institutional culture within OntarioU is understanding how the political frame, as Manning (2018) described, is applicable to its context. Manning's discussion of the political frame is complementary material to Bolman and Deal (2017) that provides additional content regarding internal relationships and power dynamics within organizations.

Political Frame

The historical evolution of HE has shaped HEIs to be contested political ground composed of stakeholders, power elites, conflicting priorities, and strategic maneuvering (Manning, 2018). The political frame (Manning, 2018) is a fit for the OntarioU context given the latter's budgeting model and the scrutiny to which the government has turned its eye on to HE. Relationships are key to understanding structure and interactions—the political frame is about relationships as it accounts for interactions, connections, and exchanges among people (Manning, 2018). Building relationships based on collaboration and collegiality has been cornerstone to my leadership and these relationships will continue to be critical building blocks as I continue to learn about OntarioU, its culture, subcultures, and context. "Whether explicit or implicit, conflict is always present in organizations" (Manning, 2018, p. 160); at the heart of academia are debate, discussion, and healthy conflict. Culture, context, and awareness of politics will be essential components to the conversations and will inform the kind of service delivery model that may be implemented related to advising students on their academic progression.

Politics is the art of mastering knowledge of people, the way they operate, and how they think. As a result, "effective managers and professionals in all walks of life have to become skilled in the art of 'reading' the situations they are attempting to organize or manage" (Morgan, 2006, p. 3). This skill will be of utmost importance in my context and culture at OntarioU given the sheer volume of staff who are currently involved in academic progression advising. Collaborative ventures are almost always the result of staff "calling on their network of relationships to launch a new innovative initiative or improve an existing program or service" (Seifert et al., 2011, p. 5). Building relationships, reading situations, and bringing groups together will be essential elements to moving any initiatives forward to address my PoP.

The political frame focuses on conflict, bargaining, and negotiation (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are a normal part of everyday life; coalitions, however, form around specific interests and change as issues come and go (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Bargaining and negotiating will become even more important as units deal and barter to keep what are already scare resources under the budgeting framework that exists at OntarioU. Bolman and Deal (2017) stated that "parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources; conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles among contending individuals and groups" (p. 18). Although resource allocation will continue to be a topic of interest and one that impacts service delivery tremendously, all staff should be concerned not only with the service they are providing, but how their provision of this service affects student attitudes toward the HEI (Bean & Eaton, 2001). The political frame is a good fit with OntarioU given the budgeting framework in place in conjunction with a strong faculty and staff unionized culture that exists.

Political Frame and the Analysis of Power

The budgeting framework makes central service units accountable to the faculties for services that are delivered. The potent analysis of power (Manning, 2018) and its sources include "control of decision processes, control of scarce resources, symbolism and the management of meaning" (Morgan, 2006, p. 167). The budgeting model at OntarioU and its impact on service delivery highlights the reality of scarce resources and the control of decision processes. The shared accountability budgeting model at OntarioU epitomizes the political view, which sees organizations as competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Political strategies also use symbolism and meaning making to achieve goals. These political strategies are also being employed at the provincial government level in that symbolism and the management of meaning are relevant to government initiatives such as using metrics as a way to sell accountability of HE to the public (Drumm, 2000). Government metrics leverage power over HEIs, and students have little power at their disposal in this system. The social justice context for my OIP is one of equity. Students should have the ability to access, use, and rely on an automated degree progress tool where one exists. It is unjust and inequitable that OntarioU has staff who will not, cannot, or do not know how to use the degree audit tool, preventing some students from feeling a greater sense of confidence in their own degree progress report.

Macro-Meso-Micro Analysis

Executing on my OIP will require a number of first-order changes, which, as Kezar (2018) described, displays outcomes such as minor improvements or adjustments. Taking an aspirational lens, my perception is that the execution of my OIP will result in changes to the underlying assumptions, values, or culture at the institution—defined as second-order change (Kezar, 2018). This context is helpful to provide a fulsome macro-meso-micro level of analysis. Given the type of change that will occur as a result of executing on my OIP, I will be operating in the micro and meso levels of change. Dealing primarily in structural changes such as institutional policies and procedures is where the majority of work will reside. Processes and attitudes will also be impacted. Processes refer to how members interact with institutional structures, and attitudes are members' belief systems or how they feel about the organizational structures. I will have to be mindful of the micro level of change, which has the individual as its focus, and the meso level, which is concentrated on a group's capacity or institutional/office level. Seeing solutions to my OIP come to fruition will not see impacts at the macro level, which are defined as operating at the aggregative or organizational level (e.g., something that cuts across the entire institution, like gender). Although I see myself operating in first-order change, my hope would be that as solutions evolve and are implemented, a cultural shift and second-order change may come at OntarioU as a result.

Guiding Questions Emerging From the Problem of Practice

In this section I explore a variety of questions and challenges that emerge from the PoP. These questions will serve as a guide to the overarching work as the OIP continues to unfold. The degree audit tool is a result of many university practices and policies at OntarioU. The tool and the degree program requirements within it are built based on the academic calendar, which relies heavily on the university collegial governance process. Do all the faculties have the same understanding of how collegial governance processes impact the way a student interprets their degree requirements? Many academics want to offer as much flexibility to students as possible, but what if that flexibility means that the academic calendar team has difficulty translating the requirements into a document that a student can follow? Having flexible degree requirements has translated into some programs being unnecessarily complicated, and this complication becomes a potential factor that will influence the OIP .

Why are there so many different terms that mean the same—or different—things to different groups, such as *majors*, *streams*, *areas of domain*, or *concentrations*? Another area where language can be a concern is in credits outside of the major, including terms such as *electives*, *general education credits*, and *free options*. Why are there so many different ways to describe an option to a student? The nomenclature should be based on commonly understood definitions and will be vital if we are going to work toward a degree audit tool that can be used by all staff and all students. Shared understandings of commonly used words demonstrate alignment with using the interpretive paradigm as there are likely a variety of definitions which are circulating related to degree terms based on staff experiences. Common definitions and shared understandings are the foundation to assisting students overall but particularly in cases where they choose to transfer from one degree program to another—terminology should not drastically change from one major to another.

Do all staff members share the same passion for understanding and ensuring that the technology being used in our student service suite increases access and achieves the common goal of service excellence? If everyone is starting from a variety of places related to the way in which technology can help with service delivery, then OntarioU may never implement a tool for this purpose. There may be staff who continue to believe that a student requires a face-to-face interaction with a staff member to determine the best way to proceed with their academic pursuits. If OntarioU were to execute on a tool that was available and used by all staff and students, perhaps only the students who are facing extenuating challenges would be seeking out a face-to-face meeting with advisors.

Of the staff who are involved in executing service delivery, do they share the same definition of service excellence? Is it possible that wider use of an automated tool for academic progression advising could potentially lead to higher retention and graduation rates? New computer technologies have profoundly altered and will continue to alter HE (Manning, 2018)—

do we as an institution want to be part of that trend? These questions represent lines of inquiry that stem from the main problem and will continue to inform how the OIP unfolds.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

In this section, I share where I see gaps between the current state and the desired organizational state. I go on to share my perception of the change drivers at work and the change model that I will employ.

Current State and the Desired Organizational State

As outlined earlier in this chapter, 96% of current undergraduate students at OntarioU have access to an automated degree progress report. Over half of the staff on campus who are responsible for advising students are not using the tool in their advising sessions or keeping the tool up to date. A variety of manual advising methods are being used to assist students with academic progression, course selection, and eligibility to graduate. Although 96% of students have access to the tool, only 50% of staff are using it; this discrepancy creates a disjointed experience for students in these programs. Students in these situations are unable to communicate effectively with their academic advisors because they are using different mechanisms to find the same information, and it creates a mismatch in terminology and understanding when they have student–advisor conversations.

This current situation provides OntarioU with an opportunity to effect change. The desired organizational state would be for all students at OntarioU to have access to an automated tool, at any time they choose, that will tell them what they need to complete their degree. In order for this vision to fully come to fruition, staff in the academic faculties need to embrace and utilize the same degree audit tool that the students are using through the degree progress report.

The desired future organizational state will see far fewer divergent methods of advising in academic progression and degree completion.

Focus on Equity and Vision for Change

More important than a decrease in manual advising methods across campus, I see this OIP as addressing a social justice issue of equity. Given the vast numbers of students who identify as a first-generation student and who receive government financial aid (NSSE, 2020), it is unreasonable to ask this group of students to physically see someone to determine what is required to continue progressing in their degree and eventually graduate. I am concerned that OntarioU has set up one of the most important parts of the HE student service suite to be completely different from student to student, with no way to justify or defend the difference. When students are busy and engaged in other activities, such as paid employment, it is our responsibility to provide as many accurate self-serve service functions as possible, making it as student friendly as possible for them to access what they need, when they need it. I do believe that this passion I have for this topic provides a leadership-focused vision for change. The vision for change and the envisioned future state for OntarioU is that all students will have immediate, on-demand access to an online degree progress report, that all academic advisors will be using the degree audit tool as their singular tool, and that it will be central to their practice. Having a solid vision for change achieves a core change strategy outlined by Kezar and Eckel (2002), which I discuss further in Chapter 2. In order to achieve this desired organizational state, a review of the change drivers is necessary.

Change Drivers

A driver of change is a factor one cannot control that has a significant impact on factors that one is able to control (Buller, 2015). Political, technological, and demographic factors are change drivers that may impact my OIP. Provincial governments will always be a change driver for HE. Provincial policies and directives have incredible influence over HEIs and the goals they set for themselves. With the increased accountability of HE (Drumm, 2000), provincial governments are leaning more towards performance-based funding, which will have significant impact on how institutions qualify for resources. OntarioU has struggled to keep up technologically with other institutions because it has a homegrown, legacy-based SIS. How will OntarioU tackle the discrepancy between student expectations (self-serve functionality) and current technology functionality?

Another change driver is demographics: What if our student population changes? Will OntarioU be able to respond quickly to different student needs if the student demographics change significantly? For example, what if the percentage of international students goes up substantially? These kinds of demographic changes have profound impacts on student service delivery models as students from different backgrounds have a variety of needs. I see political, technological, and demographic factors to be change drivers that may impact the evolution of my OIP.

In addition to these external change drivers, there are also internal change drivers that will impact this OIP. As discussed earlier in the chapter, related to the university academic plan (OntarioU, n.d.-b) and our mission, there is drive for change from the very top and a sentiment that staff cannot continue doing things the way we have all these years. The appetite exists for change and senior administrative leadership support at the highest levels is visible—which is seen as a core change strategy (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Although OntarioU is in the process of implementing a new SIS, it is years away, and the current system is not meeting student needs or their expectations. Equally, providing a solution to the PoP now will lay foundational groundwork for the new system. All of these change drivers assist in building the case for the envisioned future state in collaboration with the broader community, which speaks to the alignment with the theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). The change model I have chosen to employ provides an opportunity for me to highlight the key priorities related to this PoP while at the same time balancing stakeholder and organizational interests.

Change Model

Welton et al. (2018) asserted that strong leadership is required to steward the vision and foster the institutional buy-in needed to move changes forward. Following Welton et al.'s assertion, I have a strong case and vision to address a social justice issue of equity. To execute on the vision of an automated and accurate degree progress report available to all students, one that is also used by staff, I will be employing Kotter's (2012) eight-step change model. Step 1 of Kotter's model is to "establish a sense of urgency" (2012, p. 18), which has been incredibly helpful to me in other change initiatives and is one that I would like to use again. Given the strategic goals of OntarioU, which refer to student access through to success (OntarioU, n.d.-b), and the new Division of Students' priority of "service excellence" (Vice-Provost Students, personal communication, August 16, 2021), I see streamlining and automating academic progression to align well with institutional and divisional priorities. Establishing and maintaining a sense of urgency will be useful to keep the momentum going with regard to this change initiative.

For me, the urgency comes from a number of areas; one is the need to create as many opportunities as possible for students to access their information digitally. Forcing students to contact staff directly when we are dealing with over 55,000 students does not seem efficient especially if this is not something that the students themselves are asking for. Decreasing staff contact from students through the use of an automated degree progress tool will create more room for developmental conversations (Broadbridge, 1996) rather than course progression conversations. Last, and likely most important, highlighting this issue as one of equity should help to achieve buy-in and establish urgency. I will not follow Kotter's (2012) model in a linear or lock-step fashion, but I do believe that his eight-step model will be a great guide for me to use. In the last section, I examine the readiness of the organization for change.

Organizational Change Readiness

One of the most monumental changes that a university can undertake is replacing its SIS (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 2006; PA Consulting, n.d.). OntarioU has gone through the procurement process and signed a contract with a vendor to implement a new SIS by 2025. This initiative was undertaken and supported by the Board of Governors in response to a homegrown legacy system that can no longer meet the needs of its staff or student users. Currently, multiple pieces of software function in silos and are not interconnected in any way: for example, class, curriculum, and exam scheduling software are separate from the SIS. This complicated set up causes processes to be manual, inefficient, and sometimes ineffective. The campus community began clamoring for change during the past decade and momentum has been building. Therefore, going through the process of procuring a new SIS software was seen as the best solution.

The current degree audit tool that is used at OntarioU—while homegrown—features automated, up-to-date information for staff and students to review academic progression, should they choose to use it. There are issues with the current tool, and those faculties that use it frequently have worked with the central degree audit team to identify and address those areas of concern. For the other half of campus, if the audit team and our faculty partners do not work on addressing these issues prior to the implementation of the new SIS, the latter is not going to magically solve the issues that are surfacing now. I am keenly aware that part of my role is to prepare the campus community for the implementation of the new SIS. A degree tracking tool (similar to the functionality that currently exists) is on the roadmap for completion with the new SIS.

It is my belief that for this module of the new SIS to be implemented smoothly, OntarioU needs to address current areas of challenge so that they do not persist in the new software. One example of a recurring issue is that of transfer credit and the way it is updated and displayed on the degree audit tool. Transferring credit is a manual, tedious process—regardless of the tool that a university uses. Applying transfer credit is an important piece of the puzzle that campus users need to understand if they are going to embrace the current degree audit tool or a new one. I have shared this sentiment at several meetings with a number of campus stakeholders, and colleagues are slowly starting to understand the weight of the message.

In addition to assisting the campus community in being prepared for the implementation of the new SIS, another part of my role will be sustaining what has been implemented. The instructional technology team at OntarioU has a scoring system for assessing change readiness before embarking on a new project. One of the pieces of scoring includes the sustainment of the technology project after it is implemented. To accurately situate my perception of the institution’s capacity and readiness for change, I will describe the tool that is currently used to assess change readiness at OntarioU. It was created by the information technology team and it uses an in-house measurement assessment. The change readiness tool measures impact versus effort of the project and sustainment. Once the information technology team has completed its part, all operational managers who will be impacted are asked to complete the change readiness component of the questionnaire. The change readiness component is broken down into three separate categories and asks the manager to determine whether the staff members on their team are ready for change and can sustain the change, and it asks for a ranking similar to a Likert scale between 1 and 5. The tool is informal, and the process is not too rigorous; the technology team created it with technology as its focus. Change needs to focus on the people who will be impacted.

Change readiness is impacted by organizational capacity such as healthy decision-making processes, nimble processes, strong communication systems, training and professional development, and a stable employee base (Kezar, 2018). After having observed OntarioU for 18 months, its organizational capacity is strong, based on Kezar's (2018) list. Healthy decision-making is in place with collegial governance, there are nimble processes in place proven through numerous pivots due to COVID-19, and training and professional development for staff are readily available and encouraged. Communications could always be stronger, but generally, OntarioU has a strong communications system in place. The employee base is stable, but change for long-serving staff can be difficult especially when staff feel that their identities are closely tied to their work roles (Buller, 2015). Overall, according to the context of organizational capacity as it relates to change readiness as defined by Kezar in 2018 (healthy decision-making processes, training and professional development, and strong communication systems)—OntarioU is ready for change based on my assessment of its organizational capacity.

Readiness for change is influenced by and related to many other factors and conditions such as mission, infrastructure, and policies (Kezar, 2018). These three areas are strengths at OntarioU. A clear mission has been outlined, the infrastructure is in place, and policies are the backbone of the university. Policy plays such an important role at OntarioU that in cases where a discrepancy arises between faculty and administration or leadership and faculty, policy is the place where all staff will turn to sort out a disagreement.

The organizational readiness tool that I have used to assist in confirming what I believe to be true is Kezar's (2018) change readiness survey (see Appendix B). Using this tool has provided me with a greater degree of certainty that OntarioU is ready for change. The results show that, yes, OntarioU is ready because the HEI is embarking on the implementation of a new SIS, a new campus will open in 2024, there is strong organizational capacity, and ties to the mission and values of the institution can be made. Holt and Vardaman (2013) described that a "meso level of analysis shows how the institutional environment shapes readiness through discourse" (p. 15). The discourse at OntarioU is very much focused on the changes that are already under way, and my perception is that there is an undercurrent of excitement related to these ventures. For the reasons outlined, OntarioU is ripe for change in degree audit.

The degree audit tool is one which has significant advantages for students and the overall student experience. My assessment of the organization's capacity for change includes striving to measure and ensure that the correct infrastructure (human and financial) is in place to enable another technology project to be successful. As Holt and Vardaman (2013) noted,

> Readiness for change requires the willingness, capability, and mindfulness to change; an organization filled with individuals who are energized about an impending innovation but are ill equipped to accomplish it—is no more ready than one that is apathetic and well equipped. (p. 16)

As organizations embark on major business transformations, the need to assess and develop organizational change readiness practices cannot be overemphasized—too often information technology solutions neglect the human factor (Napier et al., 2017). Engaging as many stakeholders as possible will assist in mitigating the risk of not paying attention to the human element given that my OIP has a technological focus. Paying close attention to the human resource factor was another foundational reason for the selection of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) as the overarching theoretical framework for my OIP.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

The overview I have provided of the organizational context at OntarioU highlights a bureaucratic yet collegial environment. These are environments which I am familiar with and comfortable working within. I feel confident that an authentic and transformational leadership approach with a strong ethical foundation can assist me in building the relationships I will need to initiate change regarding the current degree audit tool at OntarioU. Understanding the cultural and political context, using Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames, applying the interpretive paradigm to capture unique perspectives, and having the overarching theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) should be a master toolkit for navigating through this journey. The questions emerging from the PoP will serve as my guide to keep me focused on my vision for change. Last, ensuring that OntarioU is ready for this change will be an essential component to seeing my OIP evolve into its implementation phase.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

In this chapter I explore in greater detail my transformational, authentic, and shared leadership approaches to change and my framework for leading the change process. I conduct a critical organizational analysis, explore possible solutions to address the PoP, select a preferred solution, and then complete the chapter with a section on the social justice issue of equity, which is at the centre of this upcoming organizational change.

Leadership Approaches to Change

The transformational (Shields, 2010) and authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) approaches capture who I am as a person and what I value when focusing on change efforts which have social justice and principles of equity at their core. Although transformational and authentic leadership approaches will be core components to any success that I may achieve in approaching change at OntarioU, the principles of shared leadership (Kezar, 2018) will complement these approaches during the solutions implementation stage.

Transformational Leadership

Given the similar focus on social justice (Shields, 2010) for both transformational and transformative leaders, and that I see OntarioU's institutional leadership modelling transformative tendencies, it is helpful to share key pieces of both theories. Transformational leaders strive to inspire their followers (Bass, 1990) and improve organizational efficiencies (Shields, 2010). I have always tried to inspire those whom I lead, and a goal of improving organizational efficiencies has always informed my work. Transformative leaders choose to engage and challenge the actual structures that perpetuate inequity through power and privilege (Shields, 2010). Transformational leaders encourage development and change (Basham, 2012); I want to improve systems and processes, and in a peripheral way, I am looking to address the systemic structural issues that are perpetuating inequities through power and privilege. Given the nature of the PoP, the need to address the lack of a strategic approach to advising students for academic progression, transformational leadership will guide me. I want to inspire those around me toward a common goal of improving an area of our organization that will have a positive impact on the student experience. Transformational leadership will propel change forward through its focus on social justice and equity (Shields, 2010), which relates well to my OIP and is also in alignment with the institutional, transformative leadership lens and organizational context.

My goal is to assist OntarioU with ensuring that all undergraduate students have access to a tool that assists them in selecting the appropriate courses for their intended program of study, one that ultimately assesses and communicates whether they are eligible to graduate. The core issue that I see in this OIP is equitable access to this tool for all undergraduate students. For these reasons, I am solidly grounded in the transformational approach to leadership. Transformational leadership is nicely aligned with my OIP given that change will include a focus on social justice and equity (Shields, 2010). Social justice principles are important to me and are part of my values. They will therefore align well with my other approach to leadership—authentic leadership.

Authentic Leadership

An authentic leadership approach is a great fit for who I am as a person. As discussed in Chapter 1, I rely on the definition provided by Walumbwa et al. (2008) for the authentic leadership approach. They summarized that authentic leadership has four main components: balanced processing of information, relational transparency, self-awareness, and an internalized moral perspective. These four components of authentic leadership are integral to the ways in which I operate. I ensure that I listen to as many perspectives as possible before making a decision, operate with integrity in my relationships with people, and have a deep level of introspection. A strong combination of these traits leads to an internalized moral perspective. The key traits at the core of authentic leadership will be critical components to moving any change ahead at OntarioU. Regardless of the direction that the university chooses to take, it will be my responsibility to ensure that all impacted staff (academic advisors and leaders in the faculties, RO staff) collaborate on a solution; otherwise, they will continue to operate as they have for years. The keys to success are providing colleagues with a compelling reason for change and being someone with whom they want to work—an authentic individual in all situations, at all times.

Authentic leadership has been criticized for being individualistic, with a heavy focus on the self or the leader, and an inclination toward follower burnout (Duignan, 2014). These considerations are offset and ameliorated by the transformational leadership approach, which balances this focus on the individual through its empowerment of followers (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Gardner & Carlson, 2015). Transformational leadership has also been criticized for its focus on the leader (Northouse, 2019) given the potential for abuse of the power held over followers and appeal to strong emotions that may not hold positive moral values (Hay, 2006). Followers can be manipulated in ways that see them losing more than they achieve (Bass, 1998). These criticisms are balanced by an authentic leadership approach grounded in positive values of honesty, justice, fairness, and equity. There is a strong link between authentic leaders who inspire greater performances among key stakeholders (Duignan, 2014) and transformational leaders who are focused on social justice and equity as outcomes of their work (Shields, 2010).

Authentic and transformational leadership approaches speak to who I am as a person and what I want to achieve as a leader; they also serve to complement each other's limitations.

Type of Change

The degree audit tool is underutilized. The tool itself needs to be examined, not the system within which it operates. For this reason, I am promoting and engaging in first-order change, as Kezar (2018) described, which displays outcomes such as minor improvements or adjustments. First-order change is contrasted with second-order change, where underlying assumptions, values, structures, processes, and culture need to be addressed in order for change to occur (Kezar, 2018). A number of first-order changes will need to come to fruition for my OIP to be fully executed. Organizational learning can be used to understand first-order change (Kezar, 2018). This will be an important piece to success given the amount of learning which will need to occur amongst the academic advising staff to use the degree audit tool effectively.

My perception is that OntarioU is frequently in a state of crisis or dealing with an urgent, emergent issue. This perception may be a result of starting employment during a pandemic where the goalposts have shifted frequently based on changing government orders, safety protocols, and faculty desires. Nonetheless, this is the context that I was hired into and the culture of crisis that I perceive this context has created. I have shared these perceptions and observations with long-serving colleagues who have assured me that this culture of crisis is not just a result of COVID-19. OntarioU has persisted on and exists in crisis mode, dealing with urgent matters, from one to the next, in a recurrent cyclical state. In this environment, creating the urgency to propel change to address the PoP will arise from student feedback expressing frustration with the degree progress report. Their complaints, which have been continual on this issue and uncommon for others, relate to the unfair access to automated information about degree requirements and staff shortages. Student voices have become more and more vocal on this issue, and some faculties are in a human resource crisis. Having degree progression information available in an automated fashion addresses both of these concerns and fuels the urgency that will be required to implement this OIP at OntarioU.

Given this environment of persistent crisis, it will be critical for me to incorporate a flexible and adaptive style, in addition to the authentic and transformational approaches, that will assist me in navigating through all the necessary stages of change. Authentic and transformational approaches will provide the foundation to the way I engage stakeholders and address issues that present themselves.

Balancing all the competing perspectives and priorities will require an adaptive and flexible approach, as Yukl and Mahsud (2010) espoused. Being adaptive and flexible should provide a basis for being able to pivot quickly, adjust plans accordingly, and incorporate feedback as OntarioU makes the journey to incorporating change into our everyday work lives. Adaptability will be an important piece to the puzzle given that there is so much going on at the institution—there will be competing priorities. Academic advisors within the faculties have only so much time at their disposal, and this time crunch is combined with competing priorities, so it will be important for me to be flexible and adaptable when working with these campus partners. Faculties and departments will have their own priorities and needs (e.g., curriculum development, committee work, student escalations) that my faculty colleagues will be trying to address and juggle. If I am insensitive, inflexible, and unwilling to adapt, then the solutions discussed later in this chapter will be difficult to implement.

Shared Leadership

Authentic and transformational leadership will be informed and complemented by shared leadership. This theory is an excellent fit for the overall theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) in addition to complementing the authentic and transformational leadership styles that I have vested myself in. Transformational leadership "derives its power from shared principles, norms, and values" (Basham, 2012, p. 344).

Shared leadership intentionally brings together and includes those in positions of authority and those without (Kezar, 2018). Incorporating a shared leadership approach will be a complement to stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). As Blackmore (2013) indicated, "Leadership is about knowing and working towards a shared purpose in a principled manner" (p. 151). Shared leadership will be particularly relevant given the way in which central service budgets are created (as previously discussed in Chapter 1), but in addition to that, staff in a variety of roles (e.g., academic leadership, management, and unionized staff) will need to be involved at all stages of the process for my OIP to be fully implemented. Addressing my PoP will impact staff throughout the organization at OntarioU, as "shared leadership involves agents at the top and bottom of the campus hierarchy working together to create change" (Kezar, 2018, p. 144). It will take shared ownership, shared accountability, shared responsibility, and shared leadership for my OIP to come to fruition. I will need to engage stakeholders and staff both within and outside the RO to work through wider implementation and usage of the degree audit tool.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) is the overarching theoretical framework which encapsulates this OIP. Stakeholder theory resonated with me as it aligns with my leadership approaches (authentic, transformational, and shared) and the change process I will use, which is Kotter's (2012) eight-step model. A significant number of staff around campus, all academic advisors who are embedded in undergraduate faculties, and staff within the RO will be impacted by any change initiative that is explored to address my PoP. The theoretical framework of stakeholder theory lends itself to hearing from and engaging with as many voices as possible that have a vested interest in the outcome (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). Freeman (2010) wrote that stakeholders in an organization can be used to enrich the understanding of organizations and the way employees think about them. Phillips (2011) summarized how frequently stakeholder theory has been linked to corporate responsibility. Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames will be the backbone to framing how I will lead the change process. The backbone is the strong foundational support provided through a deeper understanding of OntarioU through the four lenses. The change process will be engaged through Kotter's eight-step model, supplemented by Purokuru and Nauhemier's (as cited in Buller, 2015) change journey map.

The Four Frames

The following sections outline Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames—structural, political, human, and symbolic—and explain how a more robust understanding of OntarioU from these perspectives will assist in driving change efforts related to this OIP. A richer foundation with regard to the human and symbolic frames, in particular, given their focus on people and what they deem to be important, demonstrates a commitment to align all threads of the OIP with the theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010).

Structural Frame

The structural frame is concerned with organizational structure like rules, policies, processes, and procedures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). OntarioU has a plethora of rules, policies, processes, and procedures. In fact, there is a project underway at OntarioU to ensure that procedures are not intertwined and entangled with policy. While this work is underway, changing some central procedures could help to move some departments and faculties to become compliant with preexisting rules, such as enforcing application for graduation deadlines, having a drop-dead date whereby all grades need to be in the system for a student to be eligible to receive their degree, and ensuring that the academic calendar is an accurate reflection of the degree requirements.

At OntarioU, the academic calendar is referred to as the contract between the student and the university. The degree audit tool has been built based on the degree requirements as listed in the academic calendar because these are separate system tools that are not linked in any way. There have been numerous instances in which academic advisors have used internal faculty documents to advise students that are not a direct match or are not reflected in the academic calendar; this practice is problematic. Cleaning up some of these areas of nuanced difference in the accuracy of source data for degree requirements will significantly assist students and, in the long run, staff. Appreciating these structural realities through the use of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames positions me to understand how rules, policies, and procedures impact this OIP and how a solution may be applied.

Political Frame

The political frame will be helpful to assist in navigating areas of campus where policies, processes, and procedures are so deeply entrenched. Proposing changes to said policies, processes, and procedures will mean treading on sensitive ground. The political frame is particularly relevant to the OntarioU context as it sheds light on resources and focuses on bargaining and negotiation (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The political frame is also important for this OIP as it draws connections among coalitions, interest groups, and power elites (Manning, 2018). Relationships are the key to understanding structure and interactions (Manning, 2018).

The political frame will be particularly useful in conjunction with Kotter's (2012) eight-step model as there will be many competing interests, opinions, and perspectives. "Creating the guiding coalition" (Kotter, 2012, p. 53), which is Step 2 of the model, and "empowering employees for broad-based action" (Kotter, 2012, p. 105), which is Step 5 of the model, are excellent ways to handle conflict that is always present, whether explicit or implicit (Manning, 2018). The political frame is also particularly relevant given the way OntarioU engages in budgeting. The budgeting model allows the faculties to assess and contribute money centrally for services provided and rendered. As government money decreases, as belts tighten at OntarioU as a result, and as performance metrics loom, there may be an increase in conversations related to the quality of those centrally delivered services (of which degree audit assessment is one). The application and use of Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames provides me the ability to be aware of and sensitive to these political realities.

Human Resources Frame

The human resource frame is relevant to the OntarioU context in that it has humans and relationships as its primary focus (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Given the number of staff that will be involved and impacted by any change initiative to address the inconsistent use of the degree audit tool (from associate deans all the way to support staff), this frame will be critical. The Kübler-Ross theory of change (Kezar, 2018) highlights the importance of people and serves as a reminder that people’s identities are so closely tied to their work that significant change can be equated to the grief that one feels over the loss of a loved one (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). This insight is top of mind for me with regard to the possible solutions to my PoP given that there are some long-serving (20+ years) staff at OntarioU who will be impacted by the execution of this OIP. Every break from the past can be perceived as a little death (Buller, 2015). For this reason, long-serving staff may struggle or suffer more grief as the organization journeys through change. I anticipate that changes will, or can, have a profound impact on staff identity. Collaborative, collegial partnerships with academic units and advisors across campus at OntarioU will be at the epicentre of change related to this OIP. Due diligence requires that care and attention be paid to campus partner needs, which may be more aptly provided given the knowledge acquired through the use of the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This, in turn, provides a solid connection to the importance of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) as a core tenet in bringing impacted people together.

Symbolic Frame

The long-serving staff complement that exists at OntarioU has created a strong symbolic and cultural context. The most powerful symbol that I perceive to be in operation at OntarioU is the strongly held belief that “the way we do things at OntarioU comes about because it is the way things have always been done.” As Bolman and Deal (2017) noted, meaning is not provided to us; we create it. I see this component as critical to the overall framing of the change process. The manual advising methods, such as checklists, that are currently being used at OntarioU for academic progression advising, are tools that staff are comfortable with and have used for years. In conjunction with Bolman and Deal’s four frames, the interpretivist and social constructionist perspectives (Manning, 2018) will parallel and assist in deconstructing perceptions of the degree audit tool. Dealing with so many different staff, some of whom are long serving in their roles and have strong beliefs about the way things are done, implies that I will encounter many interpretations and perceptions of why they are not engaging with the degree audit tool in its current form. It will be incumbent upon me to hear these diverse views and opinions and to remember that everyone has their own way of constructing meaning, which informs how they engage with their work.

The symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017) highlights the culture that exists at OntarioU—a piece to the puzzle that cannot be ignored. Using this frame will provide opportunity to continue evaluating, monitoring, and respecting the culture at OntarioU. As Kezar (2018) has noted, change attempts without considering culture and context are doomed to fail before they even begin. Successful change initiatives are nearly impossible without understanding the context (Kezar, 2018).

In summary, Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames provide additional organizational information through the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic lenses. Understanding the political negotiation that transpires related to student services and the symbolic context at OntarioU, including the structures, rules, policies, and procedures, in addition to the change implications for staff, will allow me to employ the transformational (Shields, 2010), authentic, and shared leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) approaches in a much more deliberate and informed manner. This deeper organizational understanding of OntarioU through Bolman and Deal's four frames shows my commitment to working seamlessly with the overall theoretical framework of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). I now turn my attention to Kotter's (2012) eight-step change model.

The Eight-Step Model

Kotter's (2012) eight-step model is one that I have personally had success with previously. Kotter's model allows me to engage in my leadership approaches (authentic, transformational, and shared) without having to adapt the model to suit my style. Given the stages that Kotter has outlined, it is my perception that they will be a great fit with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). Please see Table 1 for an outline of the eight-step model and a short description of each stage. I do not believe the model needs to be followed in a linear fashion, going from one stage to the next. I anticipate a linear progression from Steps 1 to 3, and then I foresee some fluidity between Steps 4, 5, and 6 before completing Steps 7 and 8.

Table 1

The Eight-Step Model and a Short Description of Each Stage

Steps	Description
Step 1: Create	Establish a sense of urgency towards change
Step 2: Build	Formulate a guiding coalition
Step 3: Form	Develop a strategy to bring about change
Step 4: Enlist	Communicate to put forth the vision or strategy for change
Step 5: Enable	Empower employees for taking action to incorporate changes
Step 6: Generate	Generate short-term wins
Step 7: Sustain	Capitalize on wins in order to produce bigger results
Step 8: Institute	Incorporate new or better changes in the workplace culture

Note. Adapted from *Leading Change*, by J. P. Kotter, 2012, p. 23. Copyright 2012 by Harvard Business Review Press.

The most critical component to Kotter's (2012) eight-step model is "establishing the sense of urgency" (p. 37). There will be little reason for staff around campus to completely change the way they are advising students regarding their degree programs unless there is a sense of urgency that can be created and, more importantly, communicated. Kotter (2012) has also cautioned that neglect of this component—when too much complacency is allowed—is one of the biggest errors in trying to implement change successfully. I see creating a sense of urgency as a crucial factor to use when gauging the appropriateness of the possible solutions to my OIP presented later in this chapter.

The Change Journey Map

As with all staffing groups at OntarioU, some advisors have been long serving (20+ years). In contrast, many new leaders across campus have been hired at OntarioU, including me. Using a value-driven, authentic (Walumbwa et al., 2008), transformational (Shields, 2010), and shared leadership approach (Kezar, 2018), my intention will be to gain trust with staff around campus, new and long serving, to move a change initiative forward with regard to my OIP. Whilst utilizing Kotter's (2012) eight-step change model, I foresee that the journey through change will not always be linear. When the journey is sidetracked, goes backwards, or skips a stage altogether, I predict it will be as a result of landing in one of the destinations described in Purokuru and Nauheimer's (as cited in Buller, 2015) change journey map.

Purokuru and Nauheimer (as cited in Buller, 2015) discussed a number of destinations that teams may visit while they are on their change journey. In my time at OntarioU, I have already had the opportunity to witness entire teams that have undergone significant change, visiting some of these destinations, such as the "opera house of emotions" (as cited in Buller, 2015, p. 87) and the "graveyard of old habits" (as cited in Buller, 2015, p. 87). "The opera house of emotions" (as cited in Buller, 2015, p. 87) recognizes that some of the drama arising in response to change has not been based on reason. "The graveyard of old habits" (as cited in Buller, 2015, p. 87) is a destination that I have seen staff visit in response to change several times in my short tenure at OntarioU. Staff tend to stagnate for a period of time by fixating on past practices that prevent future growth before developing new strategies to change those old habits (Buller, 2015). Given my observations thus far, visiting this destination will be inevitable.

Naming this situation and understanding this staff response to hang on to old habits will be helpful in navigating a way through Step 6 of Kotter's (2012) model, which is to enable staff to incorporate new changes in their daily work. Incorporating change is so much easier said than done when the staff who are impacted have been dealing with students and providing academic advice in the same way for a long time. Based on my previous experience as an advisor, some advising methods become comfortable and habitual, and these methods will not be easy habits to break. Kotter's change model may not address the journey that staff will have to take to change these deeply entrenched advising methods; Purokuru and Nauhemier's change journey map (as cited in Buller, 2015) will assist with these transitions. I see these two pieces to the change journey map, emotions and habits, as complementary to Kotter's (2012) eight-step model in helping to describe how the change process will look as it unfolds.

Critical Organizational Analysis

In this section, I provide an overview of the current context at OntarioU, identify gaps that exist in current processes, and use Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model to analyze OntarioU's organizational dynamics.

Current Structure

OntarioU runs in a hierarchical and bureaucratic manner, which is typical of HEIs. At OntarioU, the hierarchy exists to ensure accountability and transparency for decisions. Relying on openness and transparency builds awareness amongst the university community regarding which department is responsible if something goes awry in a certain area. The hierarchical structure at OntarioU resembles a distributed leadership model, whereby various departments and faculties are responsible and accountable for decisions made in their respective area (Gronn, 2010). Given that understanding culture and context (Kezar, 2018) are pivotal to implementing any change successfully, understanding the structures and how administrative decisions are made is a critical component to my success.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, governance at OntarioU is divided between the Senate and the Board of Governors. The Senate is responsible for all matters related to the academy, whereas the Board of Governors attends to the business or operational side of the university. Typical of HE environments is the notion that staff and faculty work in a collaborative and collegial manner (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014). Personally, I fit well within this collegial and collaborative structure. I understand and appreciate the need for hierarchical, positional authority. Within the academic governance structure, the 11 faculties have their own processes in place to shepherd various changes and amendments to their academic programs through their respective faculty councils before the changes are reviewed, vetted, and approved through the collegial governance process. The Senate is the final approval body for academic matters, which include changes to degree requirements.

Current Gaps

In writing and researching this OIP, and as I continue to learn about my own context, I have come to learn that many changes to academic programs and degrees are not making their way through the entire governance process and therefore not making their way into the published academic calendar that students follow. The academic calendar is OntarioU’s online reference to all degree requirements and is the consultative source used to build the degree audit tool for staff and the degree progress report for students. I have heard from staff around campus that one of the reasons that academic advisors do not use the tool is that it is perceived to be inaccurate, and in many cases this perception is correct. Discovering that many changes to academic curriculum have not in fact been shepherded through collegial governance and have therefore not been captured in an academic calendar was revealing. The implications of this discovery are far reaching; although managing this discovery from a governance perspective is outside the scope of this OIP, conversations and communications have already been sent out from the Secretariat's Office, the unit which supports all Senate activities and oversees all governance processes, alerting the campus community that this practice needs to cease. Of course, the degree audit/degree progress report would be inaccurate, would not hold approved academic regulations, and would potentially be the subject of Senate appeals if governance processes have not been followed to ensure that accurate data are recorded in the academic calendar. Therefore, advisors around campus are instead focusing on the accuracy of their faculty council documents and not the academic calendar to advise students.

One of the significant gaps that I see is ensuring that all curriculum changes that impact degrees are sent in for review and approval through the collegial governance system that has been laid out at OntarioU. Failure to follow this process is the most significant gap that I have identified, which may be preventing staff from perceiving the degree audit tool as reliable, valid, and credible. Currently, the systems and degree audit teams are coding only what is listed in the academic calendar, which represents curriculum proposals that have been approved through the collegial governance process and communicated to the calendar team from the faculties. The disconnect between what is published in the academic calendar and curriculum that is not being approved through collegial governance may help to explain why there are so many different advising tools being used for degree audit purposes. As discussed earlier, several different methods are being used to advise students on their degree progression. Except for the degree progress report, all other methods being used at OntarioU are manual. They are static documents that are provided to students and are accurate for that one moment in time.

Another key component to the critical organizational analysis is that these manual advising methods are incongruent with the overarching advising model that is in place at OntarioU. Postsecondary advising models are described in two ways in the research and literature: either as a prescriptive, or transactional, model, or as a developmental model, which helps the students to develop problem-solving skills (Broadbridge, 1996; Wood, 2002). Prescriptive advising facilitates responses to questions of an immediate nature (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015). This prescriptive advising model reminds me of Freire’s (1970) notion of banking education, where students are vessels to be filled with information. A developmental approach is the most suitable match to HEIs that have a degree structure that allows students maximum flexibility in combination of courses undertaken (Broadbridge, 1996).

The developmental approach to advising is reminiscent of Freire’s (1970) notion of dialogue in education, where students are empowered to be part of their learning and the learning process. Using a developmental approach to advising, student service professionals promote student development through an emphasis on building strengths and maximizing life successes (Mather, 2010). Rather than spending time on what course fills which requirement, with an automated tool students can make those determinations on their own, thereby providing the advisors with more time to focus their efforts on a developmental conversation about whether the chosen program of study fits with an intended future career.

OntarioU espouses a developmental advising approach, and I am positing that not using the automated tool is incongruent with the advising model that is in place. Advisors at OntarioU who are not using the automated degree audit tool, by the nature of the questions that they are required to answer, are engaging in prescriptive advising activity. Accessing accurate online services, especially related to a degree tracking tool, gives students the information they need, when they need it, thus allowing advisors to focus more on development and planning (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015). Decreasing student inquiries based on transactional needs related to degree requirements and allowing advisors to focus on student development are additional compelling reasons to change, as it will align practice to the theory underpinning the work of advisors. In the next section, I apply Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model to help guide a critical analysis of the organization.

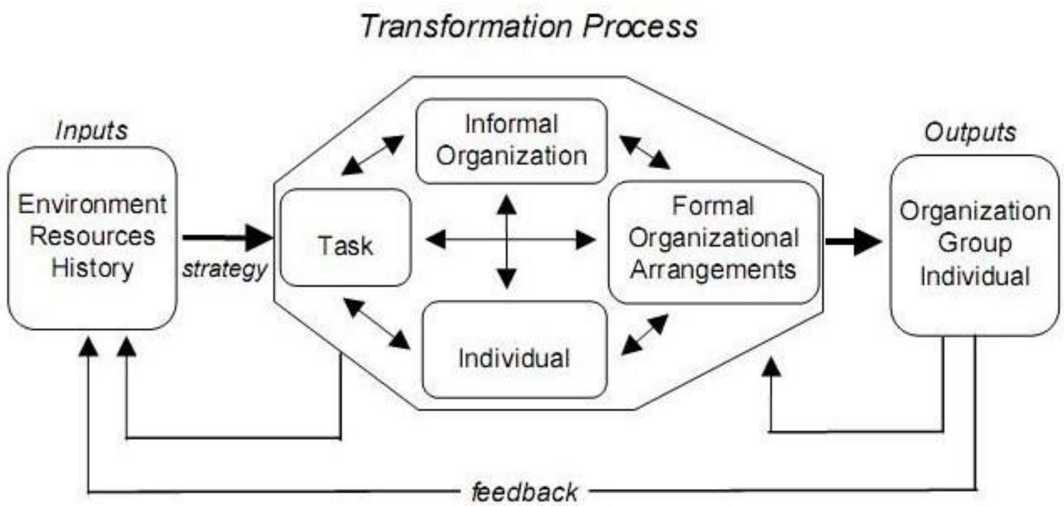
Congruence Model

Given that organizations are dynamic and highly interactive, with their constantly changing environments (Deszca et al., 2020), it is imperative that I have a comprehensive and critical understanding of my own context. The congruence model (Nadler & Tushman, 1980), as Deszca et al. (2020) wrote, "gives us a comprehensive picture of an organization, its component parts, and how they fit together" (p. 69). Before embarking on a major change initiative, organizations should be analyzed regarding their efficacy and efficiency in how they use resources from their external environment and transform them into outputs that the external environment desires (Deszca et al., 2020). Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model accomplishes this evaluation of resource utilization and can be used as a framework to assist in structuring change leaders' organizational analysis (Deszca et al., 2020).

The congruence model requires an examination of organizational tasks (e.g., the work of the organization), people, informal organization (e.g., culture), and the formal organization (e.g., structures and systems) in the context of the organization's external environment, resources, history, and other inputs (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). See Figure 1 for a visual representation of this model.

Figure 1

The Congruence Model



Note. Adapted from *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (4th ed.), by G. Deszca, C. Ingols, and T. F. Cawsey, 2020, p. 73. Copyright 2020 by Sage.

The premise of the model is that the more congruence there is between the four foundational elements—tasks/work, people, formal organizational structures and systems, and informal culture—and the more aligned they are with the external environmental realities and the strategy of the organization, then the better the organization's performance will be on the market (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Inputs

Taking on a review of the inputs at OntarioU, which include environment, resources, and history, heralds the following information. Historically, and even today, OntarioU has prided itself on being an "access" university; access is still part of the current mission (OntarioU, n.d.-b). Government funding has continued to decrease in HE (Drumm, 2000), and resources can be categorized in ways other than financial, such as human and/or technological. Although the human resource base at OntarioU may be long-serving and committed to their own methods, the current SIS has significant challenges. These significant challenges with the current SIS have been the catalyst for garnering support for technological solutions as the university navigates the implementation of a new SIS.

A review of other inputs using a PESTE analysis yield interesting points for consideration. The political implications are multifaceted, starting with the provincial government's SMAs. SMAs are agreements that include metrics for funding allocations that define what will and will not count for funding (Spooner, 2019). Then there are local, university-level politics at OntarioU, which include the way money and resources are distributed. From an economic perspective, the province of Ontario has plenty of choices for students who want to attend postsecondary, and a plethora of choices leads to competition for tuition revenue.

Social media continues to be problematic for OntarioU as students use these platforms to express their displeasure about a lack of consistent or fair service delivery. Social media has been the venue for students to express their discontent over the variance in their student experiences related to degree progression advising and the inconsistent access or availability of staff to speak to about their degree requirements. Not surprising, students find it odd that some students can access an automated degree progress report and others cannot.

Technologically, OntarioU is undergoing a new SIS implementation that is targeted for completion in 2025. An automated degree tracker tool is on the roadmap for that project, and this planned implementation is an important piece to contextualize where the institution is headed.

Last, the environmental context is one where I perceive that this OIP can assist with the institutional goal of adhering to the United Nations' (n.d.-a) Sustainable Development Goals, which underpin the entire university academic plan (OntarioU, n.d.-b). Using an automated tool for advising and degree progression decreases the need to print out manual, hard copies of other tools that are currently being used around campus.

Transformation Process

Now that the inputs have been assessed, it is time to focus on the transformation process. This is where the organization’s components—the work, the formal structures, the culture, and the people—are combined to produce the outputs (Deszca et al., 2020). The largest gap that I currently see in trying to address my PoP is to use a fully functioning and capable degree audit tool that has existed since 2005, and relatedly to invest in ensuring that the data feeding the tool are accurate and timely. Changing the advising tool that is used on campus will be a significant change for those academic advisors who are using other academic progression methods around campus should my OIP come to fruition. The majority of advisors have become accustomed to using their own homegrown faculty tools to advise students. Asking them to use a tool that they did not create and are not familiar with will be a shift in the way work is completed.

The organizational structures and systems will need to adapt to this process. As mentioned earlier, all changes to any undergraduate degree program will now be required to move through all levels of collegial governance. Collegial governance has not always been followed and has been identified as a current gap that exists at OntarioU, which explains why homegrown faculty documents are being used. The degree audit tool is built based on the academic calendar, which is not, in some cases, the most up-to-date and accurate set of degree requirements. Although variance in degree information is identified as a gap, advisors are trying to use the most accurate information available to advise students. As the administrator responsible for shepherding degree audit as a tool to use, it is incumbent upon me to help address these gaps in our governance processes. Work is already underway to ensure that adherence and enforcement of governance processes are applied by the Secretariat's Office and that there is a better understanding around campus that the academic calendar is the source reference that students are using to understand their degree requirements. All stakeholders need to make sure that it is as accurate as possible.

My collateral hope for the execution of this OIP is that the informal part of the organization, otherwise known as the culture, will also change. OntarioU has a deeply embedded and entrenched culture of symbolic rituals that are manifest in responses such as "this is the way we do things around here." This attitude may change as a result of OntarioU moving towards all advisors on campus using an automated degree tracking tool. Campus-wide utilization of an automated degree tracking tool would change the culture and norms of how students expect to access information in addition to significantly changing how staff engage with this kind of work. Framing the cultural norms and values will benefit from the political perspective, as the other elements that are important here are power relationships and decision-making processes (Deszca et al., 2020). As Deszca et al. (2020) indicated, "Culture is a product of both the organization's history and its current organizational leadership" (p. 74). I am optimistic that this combination of respect for history and leadership support for technological innovations regarding student service will assist in a successful change initiative that will benefit students.

Outputs

The last important part of the congruence model is the outputs (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In the case of OntarioU, the best measure of our success is our students' success. How many students graduate? How many students are graduating when they intended to? It would be helpful to know how many students set about to complete a degree in 4 years but have taken longer because of misunderstandings related to program requirements. Where do they go when their undergraduate studies are completed (e.g., to graduate school, to work in their chosen field of study)? One of the statistical pieces of data that should be used to evaluate the success of any potential solution to my OIP is a consideration of student retention rates (with retention rates being defined as the percentage of initially enrolled students who complete to graduation). Another key output to measure success will be the student satisfaction rates captured from alumni in the annual NSSE.

Any strategy that I engage in to implement change will require bringing people together and giving them an opportunity to be key players in the process. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) and its idea of having stakeholders who have a vested interest in the outcome involved at every stage in the process serves as an excellent theoretical framework for this OIP. Using the congruence model and the transformational work that will result is in alignment with my authentic, transformational, and shared leadership approaches. Given the volume of changes that may be required of staff around campus, the interpretive and social constructivist paradigms will align nicely given the variety of opinions and perceptions that staff will have of their current context and the way in which they advise students (Manning, 2018). The interpretive paradigm recognizes that people's knowledge of the world is always conditioned by their experiences and culture (Hein, 2017). Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames are in alignment with Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model as well. Going through the process of critically analyzing the institution in which I work, Kotter's (2012) eight-step model will be well served as the change framework. Kotter's change model connects well to stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) in that it highlights that one of the keys to success is to establish a guiding coalition (Step 2 of the eight-step model). The next section evaluates possible solutions to address the PoP.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

In this section, I revisit the guiding questions that I asked in Chapter 1 to lay a foundation and contextualize the four possible solutions which are presented to address my PoP. Assessment of these solutions involves an evaluation of the time they will take to realize, any financial implications for pursuing a particular path, and the impact on human resources. Each of these factors is ranked as low or high, and then finally each solution is ranked as far as having either low or high impact. To close the section, I present my recommended solution based on this process.

Revisiting the Guiding Questions

The first guiding question that I asked in Chapter 1 was, “Do all the faculties have the same understanding of the way collegial governance processes impact the way a student interprets their degree requirements?” Faculties tend to want to offer as much flexibility as possible to students. If OntarioU cannot publish degree requirements that are easy for students to navigate, then it has done them a disservice. The most important piece of documentation that goes through collegial governance is the calendar copy for students, yet it often receives the least attention.

The second guiding question that I asked in Chapter 1 was, “Why are there so many different terms that mean the same—or different—things to different groups, such as *majors*, *streams, areas of domain*, or *concentrations*?” Another area of concern lies in OntarioU’s use of terms including *credits outside the major*, *electives*, *general education credits*, and *free options*. As a newer staff member, it is not entirely clear to me what a curriculum proposal is trying to achieve. If staff have difficulty making these connections, I am certain that students must find it challenging as well. Establishing commonly understood terms and consistent nomenclature are keys to moving change ahead.

The third guiding question that I asked in Chapter 1 was, “Do all staff members share the same passion for understanding and ensuring that the technology being used in our student services suite increases access and achieves the common goal of service excellence?” I would venture a response to say that no, not all staff on campus share a passion for utilizing technology in delivering a student service suite striving towards service excellence. Currently, staff have a choice in whether they use technology as it relates to advising students for academic progression and graduation. If the staff had a penchant for using technology—and faculties were not continuing to endorse alternative, manual advising methods—I do not believe the campus would be facing a situation where so many staff are not using a tool that has been readily available since 2005. There will soon come a point when staff who do not share these same values or views will be misaligned with those in decision-making positions and the direction the university wishes to take.

Another guiding question that I asked in Chapter 1 was, “Of the staff who are involved in executing service delivery, do they share the same definition of service excellence?” The university has embarked on an ambitious service excellence campaign which speaks about meeting students where they are at and providing information as they need, when they need it—not when advisors or staff think they need it. Information as needed, when needed, alludes to technological solutions that can interface with the student in real time, rather than requiring that student to book an appointment to meet with staff. This structure is exactly what the degree progress tool is predicated on, and this innovation allows students to track their status and course requirements in an immediate, push-of-a-button way. The foundation has been laid for expectations related to service excellence at OntarioU through an institutional program and definition of service excellence, which are particularly relevant to the context.

The majority of staff at OntarioU have been in their roles for a long time. As such, their identity is significantly tied to what they do. Although the university has clearly laid out its expectations for service excellence, OntarioU has a work force that is long serving. Staff will have their own definitions and their own perceptions of what service excellence means. Using the interpretive paradigm and a social constructivist lens, I will be able to tease out some of the hidden gems in people's beliefs so that they can be used to work towards a solution. Some long-serving staff will have deeply entrenched views and ideas about how student services should be delivered and what that means. For example, some staff believe that a student service is being able to accommodate a student to participate in a convocation ceremony even if that student does not become eligible to graduate until the day of the ceremony. This process would not work at institutions where graduation lists are approved at Senate, weeks prior to a convocation ceremony, or where the logistics associated with organizing the ceremony preclude last-minute additions. Another school of thought would say that this is not good student service because it is not sustainable when thousands of students are applying to graduate or becoming eligible to graduate just days in advance of the ceremony itself. Graduation and convocation processes demonstrate the diverse opinions that exist related to student service at OntarioU.

The last guiding question that I wrote about in Chapter 1 was, "Is it possible that wider use of an automated tool for academic progression advising could potentially lead to higher retention and graduation rates?" This outcome—increased retention and graduation rates—occurred at two different institutions where an automated degree audit tool was implemented

(Cellotti et al., 2020; Hayes & Parks, 2020). Given the rates of first-generation students and those who access government financial aid at OntarioU (NSSE, 2020), retention rates would go up were OntarioU to have a singular, accurate, electronic academic progression tool that was being used more widely. These two demographics of students do not have access to the same kinds of supportive resources as other students, and they have less time at their disposal. I predict, based on the literature and my own experiences, that retention rates and therefore graduation rates would go up at OntarioU if it fully adopted an automated academic progression tool that students could use whenever they wanted. If students had any questions or found any anomalies in their report, they could then access an academic advisor who would understand their needs and be able to work towards a solution.

Currently, a common occurrence is that students contact an advisor with a question about their degree progress report, and over half of them are told, “Do not use that tool; use this sheet of paper that I have updated for you.” I am not at all suggesting that this response is not helpful. Rather, I am suggesting that if the academic advisor were using the same automated tool that the students are using, any issue could be fixed in real time and students could then continue accessing this information as they need it. As soon as students leave that office with that piece of paper, if they make any change to their registration, that piece of paper is no longer valid (it is accurate for that one moment in time). Relying on paper necessitates having students access advisors on a much more frequent basis for transactional pieces of information, which is an inefficient use of resources and incongruent with the developmental advising model that is espoused at OntarioU. Using an automated academic progression advising tool would free up advisors to do incredible proactive strategic planning work, not to mention the time it would save for students. Using the automated tool would help to align advising practices with the developmental advising theoretical model in place at OntarioU. Now that I have reviewed the guiding questions from Chapter 1, I turn my attention to the four proposed solutions.

Solution 1: Maintain the Status Quo

The first solution I explore is that of maintaining the status quo. Currently, approximately half the staff on campus, advising approximately half the student body, are using multiple methods to assist students in their degree progression (e.g., checklists, program planners). All the methods identified are manual tools that need to be updated by a staff member each time there is a request to do so. The other half of campus is using the automated degree audit tool to advise their students, and the students are therefore using the partner degree progress report as well.

Turning to an evaluation of the status quo as a viable option requires an assessment based on time, financial, and human resource implications. Using time as a consideration, some may argue that it would be better to wait until the new SIS is implemented before embarking on this kind of substantive change. There is a perception that the new SIS will address the current issues and deficiencies, but as I discuss in detail later, this is not the case. Using human resources as a consideration, it bears noting that perhaps not having to take on anything new right now would be helpful, almost a relief, to many, given that so many changes are already occurring on campus. However, continuing with these advising practices means continuing to squander resources in an inefficient manner through multiple touchpoints with students in academic advisory sessions. No upfront financial costs are associated with this solution, other than continuing to support the resources needed within the departmental/faculty budget modelling. Although no financial costs are associated with maintaining the status quo, it is worth mentioning that other HEIs are using automated tools. Lacking this functionality equally across all programs at OntarioU could become a reason for students to choose to go elsewhere, as it may seem unfair or be frustrating to them.

This solution does not address the issue of equity, which is the social justice issue that needs to be addressed. In addition, as mentioned, there are those who perceive that the new SIS will be the saving grace. This is not the case, as any data accuracy issues experienced with the current system will carry forward to the new system. Therefore, it is imperative that action is taken to address them now. In my estimation, the only way OntarioU can tackle any perceived issues with the automated tool and make a similar tool work in the new SIS is to have all staff using the current tool in the next few years. In so doing, issues can be addressed before the arrival of the new SIS, and the data transfer from one system to the next can contain accurate details. If these issues are not addressed in advance of the new system implementation, the degree progress tracking tool will likely have the same low rate of usage and data accuracy as it does now.

Solution 2: Decentralize the Degree Audit to Faculties

Another solution that needs to be explored is moving the entire degree audit process into the faculties. If the academic advisors do not want to buy in to the process that was developed centrally (the degree audit tool and the degree progress report), then perhaps it is time to investigate whether this responsibility should remain as a centrally administered function. Even if the students are using the current automated tool, if the advisors that they trust and rely on do not use the same tool—how effective is that design? A gap that currently exists where advisors throughout campus are using one method to track students in their degree program, and then at the end, when the student applies to graduate, the central unit uses the automated tool to determine eligibility for graduation. Decentralization would allow the faculties to build their own tools for advising, tracking academic progression, and confirming graduation. The students would know from start to finish that they are being advised on a certain tool and that the staff they rely on for advice are using the same mechanism.

Using the same parameters as above to determine viability, with time being the first area of consideration, it could take up to 24 months to transfer these duties over to the faculties. From a human resources consideration, in the short term, while they are learning the degree audit tool, advisors in the faculties would experience an increased workload as a result of this transition. On the other hand, staff who are currently in the RO conducting this work could be redeployed to assist in the faculties as the central responsibility would cease to exist. There may not be any financial impacts other than trying to sort out how the human resources would settle out once the transfer of duties has occurred.

Solution 3: Wait for the New Student System

The new SIS will be implemented by 2025, and many staff around campus believe that it will solve the current technology issues that OntarioU faces. Using time as a consideration, OntarioU loses the opportunity to address any curriculum issues and resolve current challenges if staff wait for the new SIS. In fact, if OntarioU loses this opportunity, more time will be added to the total duration required to implement an automated degree audit tool. From a human resources consideration, waiting would have no impact on staff currently. However, waiting for the new SIS will add time to the deployment of an automated degree audit tool as any current issues will need to be addressed before the tool could be fully implemented. Financially, waiting for the new SIS increases the amount of money that will need to be spent. Waiting for the new SIS will require additional time from software developers and from staff at OntarioU to address all current concerns with the degree audit tool prior to deploying it to the campus community.

Moreover, any student system will replicate the business processes that already exist; therefore, the new SIS will not magically address the current deficiencies. Solving areas of concern and pain points must be done through open conversation. If this dialogue does not occur, the new SIS will simply replicate the issues that already exist because it will be designed and built based on current degree requirements, business practices, and processes.

The degree audit tool was designed for the most basic degree structure that is offered at OntarioU, which is a 4-year single major undergraduate program. At the time it was built in 2005, 4-year single major undergraduates represented 96% of the student population. This statistic is matched today. Saying that, the complexity of double majors and major–minor combinations should not mean that an automated system cannot be designed to accommodate these challenges. If a level of complexity exists that makes it impossible to build the automated structure, these issues need to be dealt with through collegial governance in curriculum changes. The challenges will not be addressed or fixed in the new system alone.

Solution 4: Use an Incremental Working Group Approach

The last solution is the incremental implementation of staff utilization of the degree audit tool through the creation of a working group (WG). This approach would allow OntarioU the opportunity to have all advisors on campus using the tool before the new SIS is implemented, which is critical to the latter's success. This incremental WG approach would bring together members from the central service units and representatives from each faculty to discuss matters related to graduation and academic progression. The WG would include associate deans, managers of advisors, curriculum developers, academic advisors, systems team members, and staff from the central RO degree audit team. It would be the responsibility of this WG to prioritize and solve the ongoing issues and challenges as a way of gearing up and getting ready for the new SIS. In conjunction with discussing matters related to the ongoing issues, the WG would identify a path to outline an implementation plan with the current tool. The current automated tool is ready, available, and waiting for more advisors to use it. Extensive training will be required for those advisors who are not utilizing the tool so that OntarioU students can have equitable access to a 24-hour self-service tool.

Evaluating the incremental WG approach from the perspectives of time, human, and financial resources provides the following assessment: It would take just as much time as moving the function of degree audit into the faculties (if not longer), and much longer than leaving things as is—the status quo. Using a human resource lens, the incremental WG approach will impact academic advising staff because they will have to learn how to use the tool. Time and human effort will need to be made investing in understanding the tool, how to use it for advising purposes, and, finally, how to update it as the students are progressing through their degree programs. As noted in Solution 3, however, these resources will inevitably need to be invested. One of the real advantages to the WG solution is that the work being done by advisors in the faculty will essentially be the same. Workload will not increase long term, nor will it impact daily operations. The biggest change would be in the way advisors do their work.

Given that there are no impacts to the day-to-day work of these staff members, from a human resources perspective, there should be no financial implications to implementing this solution. Financially, I do not see any additional costs to this suggested solution. The incremental WG approach also allows the team to implement and target certain departments and faculties rather than proceed with a whole-scale implementation. Curricular areas can be brought on board one or two at a time. I see this as a major advantage, and one that works well with Kotter's (2012) eight-step change model, in that the WG would have the opportunity to generate and celebrate short-term wins. Achieving administrative efficiencies while decreasing student appointments related to degree requirements must be cornerstone considerations with respect to the preferred solution.

Recommended Solution

I outline my assessment of the possible solutions in Figure 2. Light blue indicates a low cost or a low involvement, dark blue indicates a high cost, and the impact section is assessed using the same colour scheme. Figure 2 outlines that based on the assessment of the four solutions related to time, human resources, and financials, the solution which is the most viable is the incremental WG approach to implementation. By 2025, this approach would see all academic advisors across OntarioU using the same degree audit tool for academic progression and assessing for graduation.

Figure 2

Assessment of Possible Solutions

Possible solutions	Time	Human resources	Financial	Impact
Status quo				
Decentralization				
New student system				
Incremental WG				

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

An ethical approach to leadership speaks to who I am as a person. In my avocation as a sports official, I am held to an unwavering, unparalleled, and uncompromising standard of high ethical behaviour. The two key outcomes that every team is looking for in an elite sports official is that the game is managed fairly and consistently. Coaches, players, and spectators reciprocate high levels of respect for officials when these two goals are achieved. This personal background makes the topic of ethics one that is near to my heart and encapsulates many of my experiences. In addition, from my own experience as a student, as a first-generation learner, anything an HEI can do to assist students with navigating their degree requirements is a worthwhile investment. Given OntarioU's first-generation population of over 36%, and with over 75% of the student population on government student loans (NSSE, 2020), one of its main priorities is, and should continue to be, providing as much information to students as they need, when they need it, and in a format that suits their schedule and circumstances.

The social justice issue that is percolating within this OIP is one of equity. I find it unfathomable that some students have access to an accurate, automated tool that can assist them in understanding where they are in their undergraduate degree journey whereas others do not. In today's world, I find it difficult to understand that even though the tool exists, not all academic advisors are making it easy for students to use it. In my opinion, this situation does not fit with an ethical organization. OntarioU has an obligation to make things fair, consistent, and accessible. Having over half the staff on campus not using this automated tool is negatively impacting the student experience; in these instances, undergraduate students are being asked to utilize tools that are manual, accurate only in that moment in time. These manual advising methods that are endorsed by some faculties force students to reconnect with staff each time they make a change to their registration. This is an unfair, unjust, and inefficient way of conducting our business, especially given that the other half of campus is accessing the tool to advise students on their academic progression—the system is inconsistent. My perception is that

OntarioU is taking a reputational risk to engage in practices that are unethical by having such diversity in advising tools when students desire automation.

In Chapter 1, I assessed the institution as ready for change. OntarioU is undergoing massive transformations on the technology front by investing in a new SIS, which is single-handedly one of the most intense technology projects an HEI can engage in. This commitment leads to me believe that it is ready for change, especially for those initiatives that have technology at their core. Technology continues to be at the core of how OntarioU can better serve students, recognizing that not every situation can have an automated solution. Student service suites are no longer meant to be transactional; where we as staff can automate services, we should (Cellotti et al., 2020; Hayes & Parks, 2020). Student services are moving in the direction of deep, meaningful conversations related to items that cannot be solved by artificial intelligence. Assessing the institution's readiness for change is an ethical approach to leadership. Ryan (2016) underscored the importance of understanding the organization well in order to strategically pursue a social justice agenda, which I feel comfortable I have done. It will be incumbent upon me to establish an urgency in the staff on campus to implement an incremental WG approach to ensure that all academic advisors are using the automated degree audit tool.

In Chapter 1, I outlined my leadership approaches. Ethical leadership is complementary and foundational to authentic leadership. Burnes and By (2012) discussed the utilitarian approach to ethical leadership, where decisions are made to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number. This reminded me so much of the work of John Stuart Mill (1859/2002), a political philosopher, who wrote about utilitarianism—the same outcome applies, which is the greatest good for the greatest number. This foundation of ethics is vital to me as it is easier to engage in change initiatives when the change instigator (in this case me) is operating from the space of doing what they believe is right. If my change case is persuasive, colleagues around campus will share my sense of an ethical and moral imperative to change the relationship that students currently have with the degree audit tool. An ethical lens provides alignment to my leadership approach of authentic leadership. One of the key elements of authentic leadership that I demonstrate is the internalized moral perspective, which is demonstrated through consistent behaviours based on character and values (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

The ethical foundation is also aligned with the transformational approach that I have situated myself in. Transformational leaders have social justice at their core (Shields, 2010). A transformational leadership approach informed by principles of social justice, equity, and an ethical foundation will lead to the substantive change that is possible at OntarioU. The incremental WG approach embodies the notion that this solution is not something that can be achieved in isolation—it will take many staff around campus to proclaim success.

As Liu (2017) highlighted, ethical leadership should be viewed as a collective political project that calls for dialogic engagement towards the goals of equality, justice, and emancipation. Liu also noted that these dialogues should involve those who are traditionally unrecognized as leaders. This view of ethical leadership is aligned well with the approach I would like to use with campus stakeholders—shared leadership. As defined by Kezar (2018), shared leadership engages staff who occupy formal positions of leadership as well as those who do not. Academic advisors who are situated in the faculties may not have positional authority, but their buy-in and participation will be critical to the successful implementation of the incremental WG approach. This section also highlights the alignment with the overall theoretical framework of stakeholder theory and engaging all those who have a vested interest in the outcome (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). Stakeholder theory has been used a way to address the problem of the ethics of capitalism (Freeman et al., 2010).

Ethical leadership is seen to be relational (Liu, 2017). Given that relationships are a pivotal part of ethical leadership, stakeholder theory, authentic, transformational, and shared leadership approaches will all align well with one another as a result. Leadership is not seen as solely located within individuals who have certain traits or styles, but also in the ways people interact, engage, and negotiate with one another (Liu, 2017). Ethical leadership is well suited to who I am as a person and allows me to continue seeking out improvements to our campus activities in the pursuit of equity, social justice, and an enhanced student experience.

Ethics lie at the heart of all human relationships and therefore at the heart of the relationship between leaders and followers (Ciulla, 2004), and all the stakeholders they interact with. Leadership is not about a person or a position; it is about complex, moral relationships between people that are based on trust, commitment, and a shared vision of the good. I am optimistic that I will be able to capitalize on the passion that staff have at OntarioU for providing exceptional student service combined with a shared sense of injustice at the inequitable access students have to an automated tool that tracks their academic progression.

In conjunction with relationships, leaders have a responsibility to be both ethical and effective (Ciulla, 2004). Effectiveness is becoming much-used jargon when it comes to the way that society and governments view HE (Drumm, 2000). Neoliberalism is an overarching theme that all HEIs need to contend with, and it pervades the way that governments evaluate institutions for funding in the form of performance-based metrics (Drumm, 2000). Given these realities, it is imperative that ethical leaders are ensuring that resources are well utilized and that administrative efficiencies are sought after as much as possible. Achieving administrative efficiencies would be another key cornerstone to the eventual implementation of the recommended solution to my PoP. Once students are accessing, using, and conversing with their academic advisors about the same degree tracking tool, student inquiries will decrease, the need for academic advising appointments will decrease, and retention rates are likely to increase (Cellotti et al., 2020; Hayes & Parks, 2020). Campus-wide usage of an automated degree tracker also frees up the academic advisors to deal with more complex issues, focusing on mental health alignment with academic success as one example. Implementing the incremental WG solution would also see administrative efficiencies achieved, and all of these gains would be through the use of an ethical lens and a foundational approach to leadership that are, quite frankly, necessities in society today.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a more detailed view of the leadership approaches that I will use to pursue change. Authentic and transformational leadership approaches speak to who I am as a person, and shared leadership is the more tangible approach that I will use to engage staff around campus. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) binds everything together as the theoretical framework and aligns with these leadership approaches and Kotter’s (2012) eight-step model that I have chosen to facilitate leading the change process. Using Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) congruence model, a critical organizational analysis was provided which led to a summary of possible solutions that were described to address my PoP. An incremental WG model was the recommended solution coming out of this chapter. Using an ethical lens and foundation to guide the process, Chapter 3 outlines the change implementation plan, how I will monitor and evaluate the change process, and finally, the communication plan, which will be critical to seeing any change come to fruition.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

In Chapter 1 of this OIP, I shared my organizational context, leadership position, agency, and lens. I went on to share my PoP, how I planned to frame the problem, questions emerging from the problem, and the theoretical framework that will guide my work. I concluded with my leadership-focused vision for change and my assessment of the organization's readiness for change. Chapter 2 discussed my leadership approach to change within a critical organizational analysis, presented a preferred solution to implement, and finished with content focused on leadership ethics and organizational change.

In this third and final chapter, I outline the change implementation plan and share how I will monitor and evaluate the change process. I also share an outline of communication strategies that I will utilize and conclude with the next steps within a discussion of future considerations. Before proceeding to the change implementation plan, I would like to share the PoP one more time. As a senior level administrator within the RO, responsible for the degree audit tool, I am investigating the need to address the lack of a strategic approach to advising students for academic progression.

Change Implementation Plan

The recommended solution as presented in Chapter 2 is the incremental WG approach. This is the preferred solution over maintaining the status quo, decentralizing the audit process to faculties, or waiting for the new SIS to arrive in 2025.

Resistance to Change

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) have contended that resistance to change happens for four different reasons: a desire not to lose something of value, a misunderstanding of the change and its implications, a belief that the change does not make sense for the organization, and low tolerance for change. The degree audit tool has been in existence at OntarioU since 2005. Given that approximately half the staff on campus are not using the degree audit tool over 15 years after its inception, overcoming and dealing with resistance will be a key to this change implementation plan. Although political behaviour can take the form of two camps publicly fighting things out, it is usually more subtle (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). The political frame, discussed by Manning (2018) and Bolman and Deal (2017), will assist me in being aware of the subtle undertones and attitudes that could undermine progress. It may not be possible to avoid such behaviours in their entirety but having some awareness of them will help me stay positive, focused, and avoid frustration. Positivity and persistent focus are values which align with my authentic leadership approach.

Education and communication about strategy (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015) are two pieces that can be used to overcome resistance given that there are misunderstandings about the degree audit tool around campus. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) identified education and communication as two areas that are ideal when information is based on inaccurate information and the initiator needs the resistors' help in implementing the change, which is the case in my situation. These concepts are explored in more detail in the communication section of this chapter.

Focus on Equity

Key to evading the emerging political behaviour that Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) discussed as occurring before and during organizational change—when the best interests of one individual or group does not match the best interests of the organization—will be to keep reminding all staff involved through a robust communication strategy that the focus, and why we are engaging in this change plan, is an equitable outcome for students. As the change agent, I will need to ensure that staff understand that there are also real wins for them, such as a decrease in the number of routine touchpoints and questions from students related to what course will fit for a particular requirement. As soon as students can access this information for themselves, students absolutely will. Staying focused on the issue of equity for students also provides the sense of urgency that Kotter's (2012) change model highlights as the key component to a successful change endeavour. The successful execution of this change implementation plan will positively impact staff and their workload and enhance the student experience. The reality is that those students who have the support of their academic advisors to use the tool are receiving better support and service in real time, via self-service, when they need or want it online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A university-wide sense of urgency is essential to my change plan. The urgency emanates from the social justice issue of equitable access to an automated degree progress tool for students. Establishing a higher level of equity for students and enhancing the student experience will resonate so strongly with associate deans that refusal to participate in this change plan will not be an outcome or a limitation. Associate deans are a critical group to the success of this OIP, as they are responsible for the advising services and supports provided in the faculties. A perceived potential limitation is that some academic advisors simply will not see this plan as a priority. This is a limitation but should not set back the proposed timelines. Working on projects being led from outside the faculties is more challenging at particular times of year. Attending to the schedules and priorities of participants will be a strategy to mitigate this limitation, one I need to be mindful of. Although I am responsible for the degree audit tool, faculty advisors who engage with the tool report up through their faculty hierarchical structures. In these circles, I have influential authority but no direct responsibility for these staff members.

The incremental WG solution supported by stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) will help to ensure that representatives from all staff groups who will be impacted by the full implementation of the degree audit tool have an opportunity to participate. The incremental WG solution is the preferred option, based on the factors assessed in Chapter 2, and one I believe in strongly because it would not be in anyone's best interest to wait for the new SIS to arrive in 2025. A few faculties will need to engage in curricular changes for the tool to be more efficient; waiting will only delay the inevitable. Rather, an incremental approach to full implementation utilizing the degree audit tool is being suggested as a way to prepare for the new SIS that will be coming to OntarioU.

The change plan and the foundation of the incremental WG approach fit well with the collaborative, collegial, overall organizational context that I have observed at OntarioU. Having senior leaders such as associate deans be part of the WG respects the hierarchical structure that exists at the institution. Senior academic leadership involvement will also lend itself to a smoother delivery of messages that will eventually need to be delivered from direct supervisors. In many cases at OntarioU, associate deans serve as the direct managers or supervisors to academic advisors and curriculum developers. Associate dean involvement from the outset creates buy-in amongst faculty leaders (Kezar, 2019), necessary for the smooth and successful implementation of the degree audit tool around campus.

Augmenting my authentic and transformational leadership is a shared leadership approach that will allow for staff in all positions, with or without power, to have a voice in the process (Kezar, 2018) and in the implementation stage. People resist change when they do not understand its implications and perceive that it might cost them more than they will gain. These situations occur when trust is lacking between the person initiating the change and the people who need to implement it (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Authenticity will be of extreme importance given the high level of mistrust that can exist between employees and managers. Participation and involvement come in the form of the incremental WG; it will require representation and champions from all sectors of the university that work with degree audit. Working closely with the Secretariat's Office, associate deans, advisors from the faculties, staff from the RO who work with the degree audit tool in reviewing student eligibility for graduation, staff from the systems team who support the tool in the way it performs and functions for staff, and students will all need to participate in how we incrementally reach full implementation. The change implementation plan is informed by Kotter's (2012) change model.

Change Plan

I see the plan unfolding in five stages: (a) set the stage, (b) gather input, (c) establish timelines, (d) provide training and support, and (e) incorporate feedback. The five stages of the change plan are outlined below.

Stage 1: Set the Stage

Associate deans will be pivotal to the success of this OIP. I have had the opportunity to connect with many associate deans around campus on the topic of the degree audit tool. The message has been consistent: OntarioU needs to increase the access that students have to the degree audit tool by increasing the number of advisors who are using the tool. This change in practice will address the inequitable access that students face related to an automated tool. The successful implementation of this OIP relies on associate deans buying in (Kezar, 2018) because they provide academic leadership in the faculties and direct leadership for academic advising. I will continue to set the stage with the associate deans by bringing them together to have this conversation as a follow up to the individual discussions that I have had with a number of them.

A group meeting also provides me the opportunity to explain how the change plan will unfold and stress the importance of establishing commonly understood terms and consistent nomenclature as keys to moving change ahead.

Stage 2: Gather Input

Stage 2 of the change implementation plan will be to allow all campus community members to explain what their experiences are with the degree audit tool, what issues they have observed in the past, and what they are experiencing currently. I am optimistic that this phase will help to clarify how faculties and programs want to prioritize the work in their unique areas. Some may want to learn how to code transfer credits before attending to technical issues. Others may want to review calendar copy and ensure it aligns with the degree audit tool and discover anomalies if they exist. This input is critical to ensuring that a comprehensive list of reasons (number unknown) exists as to why some advising staff are not currently using the degree audit tool. Surveys will also be used to gather input on user experience with the degree audit tool.

Given the volume of academic advisors around campus, I want to make sure that everyone is provided an opportunity to participate. Knowledge of the issues provides the opportunity to address them, thereby increasing staff trust in the tool. To date, numerous minor barriers have been identified and rectified by providing the opportunity for people to be heard. By having stakeholders share their experiences and opinions, I can get the necessary buy-in that is required for full implementation and usage of the tool. I will need the wholehearted commitment of others to achieve success, so it makes sense to involve them from the beginning (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

Committing 2 months (in biweekly meetings) to focused conversations with academic advisors about the degree audit tool will allow for an inventory to be built of the issues that staff see currently. Although this engagement will be time consuming, it is imperative to gather this input. The tool has existed since 2005, and I expect that the lack of usage partially originated from a lack of involvement at the outset. As the change initiator, I want to involve potential resistors in aspects of the implementation to forestall resistance (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). With a participative change effort, I can authentically listen to the people the change involves and incorporate their advice going forward (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

The interpretive paradigm (Manning, 2018) will allow individual perceptions to be explored based on those individuals' own unique experiences. It is critical to allow multiple perceptions to be shared so that all participants feel that they have been heard. Given that this tool has existed since 2005, there could be a whole host of reasons why the implementation stalled. It would be helpful for this entire endeavour to explicitly understand exactly what the barriers were and continue to be. One area that was identified as an issue was a lack of ongoing support and training required after the initial programming. The central RO degree audit team provided an initial round of training but may not have followed up with other training supports to ensure that the degree audit tool was being used.

I am hopeful that once all the past and current issues are laid out, we, as a group, can engage in creative problem-solving such as integrative thinking (Martin, 2009) rather than believing that we need to choose one option over another. Bringing staff together to share their experiences also aligns with my authentic style and a demonstrated commitment to transformational and shared leadership approaches. Asking people to participate and then telling them what they will be doing is incongruent with who I am and what leadership approach I use. This process will also empower employees for broad-based action, Step 5 of Kotter's (2012) change model.

The data gathering stage is pivotal for me to identify key staff and stakeholders from the campus community who will serve on the WG. The WG will serve as the main conduit to manage the transition from the current state to the desired state. Regular check-in meetings with each faculty, informed by a project champion, will ensure that the WG is staying well informed of any issues and addressing them. Once Stages 1 and 2 of the change implementation plan are complete, the WG members will be identified and put in place.

Stage 3: Establish an Implementation Plan and Timelines

Stage 3 of the change plan is to determine an implementation plan and schedule. My impression thus far, which will be confirmed by the first few WG meetings, is that the 11 faculties are at a variety of places with regard to readiness and capability for change. Based on my knowledge and experiences to date, it would be a disaster to assume that a change implementation plan could be mapped out in one single method that will work for all faculties given that they are not starting in the same place. Basically, each faculty will have a different beginning point based on its previous experiences with the tool. The disparate issues facing each program and faculty will require varying timelines for full implementation and execution. Given that one faculty is at full implementation already, all other faculties will have access to mentors from this area who will also serve as project champions. For these reasons, I see three groups emerging that fall into different timelines for full implementation: (a) 6 months–1 year, (b) 1–2 years, and (c) 2–3 years.

Once all the information has been collected, I will use the data to map all the programs and faculties to the timeline that is most appropriate for addressing the issues that they face. Mapping programs and faculties into groups will avoid being overly ambitious or having one timeline for all involved—establishing various timelines acknowledges faculty differences.

Implementing the change for all users at the same time would be unmanageable; hence, I intend to divide the target dates into separate categories. Not only will faculties divide into smaller groups, but even within the faculties, there may be instances where a certain degree program will require a longer implementation period. Having this concept of placing programs and faculties according to their current state and readiness for change will also provide a greater opportunity to set targets and celebrate achievements as the change plan progresses, which is Step 6 of Kotter's (2012) change model.

Stage 4: Provide Training and Support

Stage 4 entails providing the facilitation and support to ensure adequate training, ongoing central support from the RO, and a subject matter expert/project champion from the satisfied faculty that has fully implemented the degree audit tool. Sometimes having a colleague, or peer, who works in a similar position is preferable for training and communication (Heide et al., 2018). Individuals sometimes put more trust in peer-to-peer, faculty-to-faculty relationships because the individuals are doing similar work in similar roles: The difference is that they are performing these duties in different faculties. During this stage, it will be critical to engage the academic advisors in a conversation about how they wish to be trained and supported. Adults do not all learn in the same manner (Knowles et al., 1998), and it would be extremely presumptuous to approach every individual in every faculty with the same training plan. Engaging academic advisors in conversations about their own training and support will produce a plan of higher quality and one that stakeholders had an opportunity to create.

Peer support, training by a colleague, and faculty champions all speak to the important role that a guided coalition can play, which is Step 2 of Kotter's (2012) change model. Kotter used the phrase *guided coalition* to describe a group of individuals who focus on the urgency and the vision to see change through to its conclusion; for the purposes of this OIP, the WG will be the guided coalition as it relates to Kotter's change model.

This change implementation plan will require a commitment of time and human resources. Staff members who are asked to participate in the consultative phase will need to take time away from their daily responsibilities to participate. Students and advisors will need to engage with the tool, which will also take time. Technological support will be required from the systems team who currently builds, amends, and changes the background coding when issues arise. Continued reliance on the systems team for their participation is known and supported. This change implementation plan, with faculties in three different timeline groups, should help to address the technology workload so that the systems team is not inundated with change requests.

Stage 5: Incorporate Feedback

Stage 5 will be to ensure that after the initial consultation meetings and training, regularly scheduled formal check-ins occur with staff. These consultations will give advisors, in particular, an opportunity to observe how feedback is being incorporated, provide additional feedback, and share their reactions to change. After 15 years of the degree audit tool not being used by half the campus, OntarioU cannot afford to ignore issues or staff feedback. It is incumbent upon the WG implementation team to solicit feedback authentically and genuinely, with the intent of actively listening, so that information can be used productively. From the outset, agility and nimbleness will be required so that incorporating feedback is not seen as a setback, but as an improvement. I look forward to using Kotter's (2012) change model in a nonlinear fashion to address instances where feedback may mean that we need to add staff to our WG, as an example.

One potential implementation issue that may arise is discovering major issues after providing initial training and support. This plan, rooted in being agile and having a willingness to revise the process to add a requirement or engage other staff, has the capacity to address this possibility. I may need to change a timeline for a program or a faculty to ensure that change implementation is successful. I have mapped out in Table 2 an overview of where I see the faculties currently and what they will need to accomplish in order to achieve success. The short-, medium-, and long-term goals have also been captured in Table 2; I anticipate that the goals may evolve as consultations occur.

Table 2

Depiction of Faculty Groups, Associated Timelines, and Goals

Faculties	Timeline	Short-term goals	Medium-term goals	Long-term goals
Group 1	6 months–1 year	Systems team addresses technical issues still outstanding.	Advisors learn how to input transfer credit into the tool.	All advisors are using the degree audit tool.
Group 2	1–2 years	Systems team addresses technical issues related to the tool design.	Advisors learn how to input transfer credit into the tool.	All advisors are using the degree audit tool.
Group 3	2–3 years	Systems team addresses technical issues related to the tool design.	Advisors learn how to input transfer credit into the tool.	Curriculum changes are approved through collegial governance. All advisors are using the degree audit tool.

Group 1 faculties are already working with the tool and have identified gaps, some of which have been addressed within the system itself (others are in progress). This group is closer to full implementation as the issues that have been identified thus far are not arduous to overcome. Group 2 faculties are not far along in their implementation journey and will have to spend more time addressing technical issues at the forefront. The group that has the most work to do, Group 3, comprises faculties that require curricular changes and subsequent collegial governance approval to achieve full implementation. Given the length of time for curricular proposals to proceed through all levels of collegial governance, a longer timeline is attached to this group. Using the timelines established in Table 2, all three groups will be fully committed to using the degree audit tool by 2025. Successful implementation of this plan will coincide with the arrival of the new SIS in 2025 and facilitate a smoother process of data transfer between the old and new systems. As well, all degree audit implementation issues will have been attended to prior to the new SIS deployment.

The change implementation plan groups and timelines also allow me and the incremental WG to work with our partners at a predetermined pace. Mutually agreeing upon the timeline is one way I want to manage the transition from the current state to the future state. Dictating a plan would be contrary to my authentic, transformational, and shared leadership approaches. Genuine engagement with stakeholders will inform the outcomes so that participants feel that they are truly part of building the process rather than having the process laid out for them. In conjunction with these pieces, I see value in identifying a champion or ally to assist with each group. Groups 1 and 2 could benefit from having the expertise of advising colleagues in the faculty offices, those who use the tool, speak highly of the tool, and are extremely supportive of any project which has as its goal an increase in the usage of technology in order to improve efficiencies, such as increasing the usage of the degree audit tool around campus.

There are positive, forward-thinking staff who are already using the degree audit tool with a high level of success—these are the personnel around campus that I would select to engage with and empower others for individual and cultural change that will achieve the desired future state. These project champions and allies see the amazing benefits of full campus-wide usage of the degree audit tool given the volume of program changes and daily degree transfers that are received. Continuing to use a variety of manual advising methods and models is a serious detriment to the overall student experience.

I am looking forward to engaging with the large number of staff around campus who will need to be involved with this project for it to be successful. This is a challenge that I will wholeheartedly embrace. In the next section I outline how the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009) will assist me in assessing the change process through monitoring and evaluation. In the last section I discuss the education and communication needs that will be required for successful implementation.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

In this section I outline the connection of the PDSA cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009) to the monitoring and evaluation processes. The PDSA cycle is a four-step cycle aimed at the improvement of a product or process. The four stages are to plan a change, carry out the change (do), study the results, and then act, whereby the change is adopted, abandoned, and/or the cycle is engaged again (Moen & Norman, 2009). I explain the tools and measures which I will use to track change, gauge progress, and assess results. I also demonstrate how I will refine the implementation plan in response to monitoring and evaluation findings.

PDSA Cycle

Strategic management, which is concerned with the future and is uncertain, employs an organizational learning process (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). Pietrzak and Paliszkiewicz (2015) explained that organizational learning denotes a change in organizational knowledge; theories of organizational learning attempt to understand the processes that lead to changes in organizational knowledge, as well as the effects of learning and knowledge on behaviours and organizational outcomes. The successful execution of the preferred solution to address my PoP will require a focus on individuals and the advising tools that they use at OntarioU. According to Pietrzak and Paliszkiewicz, an individual's learning outcome can be crystallized in organizational routines and values and become organizational learning, nicely aligned with Kotter's (2012) Step 8, which is incorporating a new or better way into the workplace culture.

The PDSA cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009) is a model that supports improvement efforts ranging from the informal to the most complex and is applicable to all types of organizations and to all groups and levels in an organization. Given its far-reaching scope, it will assist me in keeping change associated with my OIP on track. This OIP has allowed me the opportunity to explore in great depths the planning stage of the cycle. I have been outlining the plan for change, which is aimed at improvement (Moen & Norman, 2009). Moving into the do stage of the PDSA cycle will allow me the opportunity to carry out the change, which is the incremental WG approach, the preferred solution. Once the results of the change have been examined in Phase 3 of the cycle, study, the WG will move into Phase 4: act. Phase 4 allows the WG the opportunity to adopt the change, abandon the change, or run through the cycle again (Moen & Norman, 2009). Given that I have outlined three different groupings of faculties who will be operating on different timelines, the PDSA cycle will provide an assessment tool for each segment and for each faculty.

The process of creating strategy must be iterative as its creation is built on assumptions, and the ultimate test for those assumptions is implementation (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). Pietrzak and Paliszkiewicz (2015) described the importance of measurability of the strategy, which allows the assessment of progress in fulfilling goals and reaching the vision; monitoring strategy execution is a highly complex task. Organizations have to anticipate a certain amount of uncertainty; planning and monitoring reduce that uncertainty and complexity (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). This is where I turn my attention next—the monitoring plan.

Monitoring Plan

Monitoring progress while trying to achieve success with regard to my OIP will be an essential component to keeping activities tracked. Tracking activities and monitoring progress are aligned with the study phase of the PDSA cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009). Program implementation can be challenging and involve unexpected developments and constraints (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) explained that monitoring has an essential role in tracking implementation and prompting corrective action. Effective monitoring can provide management with a balanced view of the status and results of implementation (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Areas monitored may include staffing arrangements, activities and outputs, initial outcomes, reactions of key stakeholders, financial factors, and any implementation issues; data collected could include activity records, observations, and feedback provided by stakeholders following activities (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Using the monitoring plan format identified by Markiewicz and Patrick, Table 3 outlines a monitoring plan for this OIP.

Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) indicated that a baseline study to support the assessment of specific conditions for which performance indicators have been developed may be required and useful in some instances. Components of the monitoring plan in this OIP rely on the number of instances of use of the degree audit tool increasing. The baseline data include historical peak times of usage of the degree audit tool (e.g., in April and May, in preparation for June graduation).

Table 3

Monitoring Plan

Evaluation questions	Focus of monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Monitoring data sources	Who is responsible and when
Appropriateness: Did the plan increase the number of staff using the degree audit tool?	Academic advisors	Committee agreement	20% increase in staff usage of degree audit tool	Number of logins on the tool for staff; WG to collect academic advisor feedback	Associate registrar & director; monthly
Effectiveness: Did increasing usage of the degree audit tool address the issue of equity for students?	Academic advisors and students	Time allocated to student appointments related to degree requirements	15% decrease in student inquiries related to courses required for their degree	Number of staff logins on the tool; number of student hits on the degree progress report; WG to collect advisor feedback; focus group with students	Faculty champions; monthly
Efficiency: Is the volume of student to staff interactions decreasing related to degree progression?	Data supplied from academic advisors and undergraduate program directors	Decrease in course substitutions and waivers; increase in transfer credits coded on the tool	25% decrease in student inquiries related to degree progression and 25% increase in usage of the tool	Course waivers; course substitutions; transfer credit	Associate registrar & director; monthly
Impact: Is there an increase in student satisfaction?	Academic advisors and students	Increase in reported student satisfaction	25% increase in usage of the tool	Student and staff numbers re: use of the tool	Faculty champions; 6 months
Sustainability: Is there potential in building the 4% of degree programs not currently coded in the degree audit tool?	Central RO degree audit team; academic advisors and students	Increased expectations related to the new student system	75% increase in usage of the tool	Student and Staff numbers re: use of the tool; feedback from advisors: focus groups with students	Associate registrar & director; annually

Note. Adapted from *Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks*, by A. Markiewicz and I. Patrick, 2016, p. 127. Copyright 2016 by Sage.

Having the baseline data creates comparative information that can specify which programs are using the degree audit tool, updating the degree progress report for students and returning accurate results, and which ones are not. For staff, students, and the university community, it would be extremely useful to run the data to demonstrate what these numbers of usage are before the plan is put into place to address the PoP. To track an increase to the number of staff and students using the degree audit tool, it will be imperative for all participants to understand that any changes over time will relate to the baseline. In addition, the specification of performance indicators with targets, that the WG agrees on as a group, should in fact be developed with reference to a baseline that can be provided (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The baseline information will inform the indicators that are developed, clarify the situation as it existed, and support the tracking of progress at regular intervals through program monitoring (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

Surveys and focus groups will be the main resources used to track change, gauge progress, and assess change. Sample survey questions are provided in Appendix C. Using the baseline information as a comparison, the WG will be able to track progression on a number of fronts. Surveys can ascertain comfort with and usability of the tool before the change implementation plan gets underway. Revisiting those same questions at Stage 5 could be an accurate means to gauge progress. Focus groups will serve as an opportunity to engage staff and students on topics related to functionality and comfort with the degree audit tool. It will be particularly helpful to check in with focus groups each time a technical enhancement has been made to address feedback that has been provided. My perception is that a number of technical items will need to be addressed, and opportunities should not be lost to receive feedback on solutions that are placed in the system. To move ahead, and for participants and stakeholders to feel that progress is being achieved, it will be important to revisit topics as they are addressed in the system to ensure that the degree audit tool is working as it should after issues are addressed.

Monitoring and evaluation are identified as separate but inextricably linked processes that operate in tandem to support management and accountability functions and to facilitate learning and program improvement (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). It is important to have a clearly laid out evaluation plan that staff and students can follow so that there is understanding of how the WG will measure success.

Evaluation Plan

Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) summarized that evaluation uses the results of monitoring, complemented by other forms of data gathering, to undertake further and deeper investigations, and through a logical pattern of reasoning, arrive at evaluative conclusions. These conclusions will assist in anchoring new approaches into the culture at OntarioU, Kotter's (2012) eighth and final step of the change model. Table 4 outlines the evaluation plan. Focus groups and surveys, in conjunction with the monitoring data, will be the evaluative sources in determining whether we have been successful in increasing the usage of the degree audit tool around campus.

Table 4

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Questions	Summary of Monitoring	Evaluation Focus	Evaluation Method	Who is Responsible	When
Appropriateness: Did the plan increase the number of staff using the degree audit tool?	Observe gaps in usage amongst academic advisors	Stakeholder views	Quantitative analysis of degree audit usage statistics	Incremental WG	Mid project and end project
Effectiveness: Did increasing usage of the degree audit	Difference between what was envisioned	Student and staff views	Student focus	Associate registrar and director	Mid project

Evaluation Questions	Summary of Monitoring	Evaluation Focus	Evaluation Method	Who is Responsible	When
tool address the issue of equity for students?	and what took place		groups and surveys		and end project
Efficiency: Is the volume of student to staff interactions decreasing related to degree progression?	Summary of data supplied by academic advisors and undergraduate program directors	Analysis of data from academic advisors and program directors	Quantitative analysis; surveys; focus groups	Associate registrar and director	End project
Impact: Is there an increase in student satisfaction?	Academic advisors and students	Student views	NSSE; focus groups; surveys	Incremental WG	End project
Sustainability: Is there potential in building the 4% of degree programs not currently coded in the degree audit tool?	Summary of feedback supplied by the central RO degree audit team; academic advisors and students	RO staff, academic advisors, and students	Focus groups and surveys	Associate registrar and director	End project

Note. Adapted from *Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks*, by A. Markiewicz and I. Patrick, 2016, pp. 158–159. Copyright 2016 by Sage.

Evaluation Approaches

Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) described a number of approaches to evaluation. One approach incorporates a transformative perspective that promotes human rights, social justice, and inclusivity (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Given that this OIP has a focus on equity for students, this approach resonated with me. To ensure that the focus stays on equity, it would be helpful to incorporate a social justice lens to the evaluation process. The other approach that resonated the most with me was the stakeholder approach. Markiewicz and Patrick described this process as one in which evaluation needs to focus on the role that program partners play in the achievement of collective results, to support assessments of a program’s contribution to the overall results achieved. The stakeholder approach to evaluation was a natural fit for this OIP given the number of staff around campus at OntarioU who will need to engage in and interact with the degree audit tool for real results to be achieved, and given that stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) is the theoretical framework.

The incremental WG will be instrumental in building the evaluation plan; an evaluation plan is essential to avoid confusion or ambiguity with regard to goals and outcomes (Park, 2017) and help to accomplish the change implementation plan. Involving the WG members in this evaluation planning in conjunction with an early needs assessment will assist in creating the sense of urgency and vision (Kotter, 2012) that will be required to see these changes come to fruition. One of the goals of this OIP is that staff across campus at OntarioU will be advising students on their academic progression in a completely different manner than they are accustomed to today. The incremental WG, which will include multiple stakeholders from around campus, will have the opportunity to define success, what change should look like, and what areas must be evaluated (Park, 2017). Strategic planning and management must be permanent and dynamic to form collective organizational learning (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). In order to achieve a dynamic approach to management, refinement of the change plan may be necessary in response to monitoring and evaluation findings.

Refinement of the Change Implementation Plan

Monitoring and evaluation findings may elicit the need to refine the change implementation plan. My intention is to include evaluation planning in every stage of the process to avoid the possibility of missed information or misdirection, increasing the overall success of the effort (Park, 2017). Even so, refinement may be necessary in order to adjust and incorporate feedback from stakeholders along the way. The entire purpose of combining stakeholder theory

(Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) with authentic (Walumbwa et al., 2008), transformational (Shields, 2010), and shared leadership (Kezar, 2018) approaches is to engage as many staff and students as possible in a manner that is respectful and incorporates those voices and perspectives in the planning stages. The key to refinement will be a willingness to do so, which speaks to my mindset as the change agent and also a fluid process that allows changes to be incorporated. It will be important for the incremental WG members to understand that the process is iterative and that refinements are acceptable if it means that everyone is kept engaged, perspectives are heard, and our collective eye is focused on what the future state will look like. Refinement may be necessary after receiving survey results from the academic advisors. Surveys should be meant to measure perceptions of change as well as staff experiences of the change (Kirsch et al., 2011); if we are missing the mark in any way, it is incumbent upon the WG to adjust accordingly and to communicate how any issues will be addressed.

As discussed earlier, the incorporation and use of the PDSA cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009) also allows for the iterative process to unfold. Incorporating evaluation planning at every stage of the process encourages an iterative mindset amongst participants. Full engagement of the incremental WG members in all of the planning stages is important to solidify a sense of ownership in the process; shared ownership is one of the tenets of shared leadership (Kezar, 2018) and helps to ensure that a congruent and aligned evaluation plan can complement a change effort (Park, 2017). The key to achieving success is the communication plan. Communicating the need for change and the change process, and communicating refinements as they occur along the way, will be key pieces that need to be addressed.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

This section outlines how I plan to build awareness of the need for change, how I will frame issues for various audiences, and questions and responses that I anticipate. The knowledge mobilization plan will be shared, demonstrating clear and persuasive communications to relevant audiences. Finally, I share how I plan to communicate the path of change, milestones, and wins, and the channels that I will use to mobilize knowledge.

Building Awareness

A key strategy to this endeavour will be leveraging the foundational issue of equity at every stage of the process, including all communications. Building awareness that equitable access to an automated tool for students to use regarding their academic progression is a social justice issue will be a key piece to success. I work with staff all over campus who are passionate about students, service excellence, and being empathetic to student needs. Incorporating a perspective of equity into any conversation related to students at OntarioU is sure to instil a sense of urgency and a desire to respond given the caring nature of the staff and the fact that staff are committed to serving students in the best way possible. A critical component to the success of this entire OIP will be to communicate and build awareness around this current inequity that exists amongst our students.

The incremental WG will be the main avenue to build this awareness. One of the methods to build awareness is to use the baseline data that are available to educate staff about the current usage of the degree audit tool. In addition, the WG will have access to student perspectives through surveys and focus groups that will be utilized to support the message of inequity. Another key message that will require awareness building is the current inefficient use of staff resources. It is inefficient for staff to respond to basic degree inquiries when an option exists that could provide that same information to students, automated and in real time.

At the core, success will depend on the acceptance of the advisors who will be responsible for bringing the concept to life (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). To gain acceptance for the plan, it must be communicated, and before anyone can execute on the plan, the advisors must accept it. Pietrzak and Paliszkiewicz (2015) discussed the importance of creating intrinsic motivation by appealing to people’s need to work for a successful organization that makes a positive contribution. Sharing the quantitative data and the qualitative data from the student focus groups with the incremental WG will help to build awareness regarding the inequity in the student body and the inefficiencies that staff and students contend with while they continue to use manual advising methods. It will be important for me to emphasize the enhanced student experience that will be realized by addressing the inequity of access to an automated tool. Communication will need to highlight improving the staff experience, emphasizing the current inefficiencies in one-to-one communication to students using manual advising methods, and preparing for the new SIS. These key messages will instil the need to implement this change now; the urgency arises out of a desire to address an existing inequity for students. Equity, efficiency, and the use of technology will be the cornerstones through which awareness building will take place.

Framing the Issue and Addressing Potential Questions

Underlying these messages of equity and efficiency is the need to draw clear connections for stakeholders and the incremental WG members between equity, efficiency, the use of technology, and the strategic documents at the institution, including the academic plan (OntarioU, n.d.-b), the strategic plans for the university (OntarioU, n.d.-c), the Division of

Students, and the RO. I will use these documents to frame why addressing this PoP is necessary, pivotal, and core to the mission of OntarioU.

The feedback that I have received thus far from students in one focus group setting is that students are looking forward to this project and its outcome of more equitable access to an automated degree progress report. Students want to use technology, and one of the most difficult areas to tackle in the HE journey is choosing the correct courses in the right order to earn an undergraduate degree within a planned time frame. I am not anticipating any questions from students that would delay or hinder progress in addressing this PoP. One question they may ask is, “Will all students have access?” Should everything run according to the change implementation plan, this is one of the areas that the incremental WG will indeed get the opportunity to answer.

I anticipate that more questions will arise from staff regarding this project. One such question that I anticipate receiving or that will arise is, “Why now”? I would like to use this question as another way to build awareness to the issue of equity and to continue inciting a sense of urgency in creating change, Kotter’s (2012) first step in the change model. Responses should include that the degree audit tool has existed since 2005 and less than half the staff at OntarioU are using it. Responses should also draw clear distinctions and connections to the university documents (academic and strategic plans) that outline expectations that staff are to use technological solutions as much as possible to enhance and improve service delivery. An automated tool, available at any time, that can explain to a student exactly what they have completed towards their undergraduate degree and provide an outline of what courses are still outstanding is amazing, and OntarioU should take full advantage of it.

Another question I anticipate being raised from advising staff is, “Why can’t we wait for the new student system?” Responses need to include that the new SIS will replicate issues that OntarioU is currently experiencing with respect to degree audit. Continuing to ignore the issues that exist in the current degree audit tool means a lost opportunity to fix these areas of concern before launching the new SIS. Every software system has its nuances that need to be learned. Working with the automated tool that currently exists will make the use of a future one easier for all impacted stakeholders. Staff will have become acclimatized to entering transfer credits into a database; they will have familiarized themselves with how to enter course waivers or course substitutions for a current degree requirement. Currently, for staff around campus who are not using the degree audit tool, transfer credits, course waivers, and course substitutions are handled through emails that go back and forth between the faculties and the central degree audit team in the RO. It would be so much more efficient, for staff and students, if course substitutions, as an example, could be tracked on each student degree progress record rather than continuing to track them manually. Utilizing the degree audit tool in its current iteration would allow staff the opportunity to engage with a technical solution in advance of the new system coming into place. It would also give the university an advantageous opportunity to address any issues with the way the current degree audit tool was built so its functionality can be improved in the new SIS.

This question about waiting for the new SIS also surfaces the necessity of highlighting that if there are any issues with curriculum design, or how degree requirements are outlined or interpreted, they will not be corrected unless the current automated tool is utilized. Waiting for the new SIS will merely replicate current challenges. OntarioU has the luxury of addressing any curriculum obstacles now rather than waiting and assuming that technology will solve its current challenges. Any technology tool is built based on a logical outline of requirements; if the outline of requirements is compromised, users would never know unless they actually used and tested the tool. For a future degree audit tool to be successful, OntarioU must first identify and amend the issues that currently exist.

For all of these reasons, Stage 2 of the change implementation plan, gather input, is critical to the success of this OIP. Giving staff the opportunity to raise their current concerns with the degree audit tool will become one of the best ways to communicate how the WG could address the issues that are raised. Beatty (2015) advised that finding out what the stakeholder issues are will help to address those concerns in the communications that are crafted and sent out to them. I do not want to guess what these issues are; I need to know exactly what stakeholders' concerns are so I can effectively address them and communicate that they have been addressed. Being open and honest with communication is not only a good fit with an authentic leadership approach (Walumbwa et al., 2008), but also will allow staff to hear what other colleagues are thinking and feeling. This OIP will fail before it begins if staff believe I am hiding or not disclosing information.

Knowledge Mobilization

I see this OIP as engaging in macro change management, where the target of change is organizational direction, structures, and processes (Kang, 2015). Change agents for macro change management should play the role of a change leader (Kang, 2015), which I see myself doing as this OIP unfolds given that my role and agency as associate registrar has overarching responsibility for the degree audit tool. The successful integration of using the automated degree audit tool will require associate deans and advising managers who are applying micro change management strategies within their own units and teams to manage resistance to change, assure the details of change implementation, and disseminate and follow up on the proposed intervention (Kang, 2015).

The use of the word “study” in the third phase of the PDSA cycle emphasizes that the purpose of this phase is to build new knowledge (Moen & Norman, 2009). The study part of the cycle allows participants to review the results and to investigate what was learned, what obstacles were observed, and what, if anything, did not go smoothly (Moen & Norman, 2009). These are all valuable components to overall organizational learning. The PDSA cycle also provides a simple way for people to empower themselves to take action that leads to useful results in the tradition of learning (Moen & Norman, 2009). Empowering employees for broad-based action is also a great fit with Kotter’s (2012) change model, as this is the fifth step.

Integral to both knowledge mobilization and action research is the idea that research can and should ignite change (Mosher et al., 2014). It is important to build capacity by nurturing collaborative learning spaces, drawing many others who are situated differently and with varied perspectives into dialogue and embracing change (Mosher et al., 2014). Allowing staff to come together and share their perspectives allows multiple understandings of the degree audit tool to surface. This is exactly why the interpretive paradigm will work so well for this OIP: multiple perspectives built on people’s own experiences with the technology, coming together to share current experience and to create a shared vision (Kotter, 2012) through the clear and persuasive messages outlined earlier: equity for students, achieving efficiencies for staff. The knowledge mobilization comes to fruition when the communication threads are tailored to the various audiences (Beatty, 2015). Different groups of staff will require different amounts and kinds of information. Associate deans will need to understand at a high level of the change plan how their staff will be impacted. Advising teams will need to have detailed information about the way the degree audit tool functions related to the various responsibilities that they carry out on a daily basis. Communicating the path of change and the milestones achieved along the way are key pieces to accomplishing knowledge mobilization across campus at OntarioU.

Communicating the Path of Change, Milestones, and Wins

Communication is a vital ingredient in successful change initiatives (Beatty, 2015). Some of the negative responses to organizational changes are caused by leaders' oversight of the importance of communicating a consistent change message (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Expert communication is indispensable when persuading people to support change; that is, communication itself can produce change (Beatty, 2015). Communication with people is more effective when people perceive that the change agent is similar to them, such as having similar values, education, and beliefs (Kang, 2015). My values and beliefs align with those of the staff with whom I will be working closely on this project. The associate deans, the academic advisors, and staff in the RO believe in service excellence, efficient use of resources, and being empathetic to student needs. Establishing and reiterating that these three groups share these same beliefs and values will be a solid ground to start out from with regard to a robust and thorough communication strategy.

Building on shared values and beliefs will underpin the ability to create a shared vison of what the future state will look like, Kotter's (2012) third step in the change model. Once the shared vision is created, communicating that vision (Kotter, 2012) in the fourth step of the change model becomes critical. Before stakeholders can be asked to adopt a new view of the future, they must understand why they are changing, what they are changing, and how they are changing (Beatty, 2015). Using communications principles outlined by S. M. Klein (1996), such as creating message redundancy (i.e., repetition is related to message retention), using several media, and preferring a face-to-face medium, can provide venues for explaining the why, what, and how of this OIP. The incremental WG will be the conduit to manage the transition between the current state and the future state, and for key messages to be communicated.

Stages 1 and 2 of the change plan allow for communication to focus on ensuring that organizational members are prepared for the change and ideally become its supporters (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). WG meetings will also give me a chance to capitalize on face-to-face communications, which, as S. M. Klein (1996) and Beatty (2015) noted, can be a powerful force in a group context in the service of successful change. Given the membership of that group, line hierarchy is the most effective organizationally sanctioned communication channel (S. M. Klein, 1996). There will be an expectation that incremental WG members will be the liaison with their own teams on the change plan, key points, and milestones achieved. Having associate deans and advising managers act as communication liaisons will be a critical component to overall success given that direct supervision is the expected and most effective source of organizationally sanctioned information (S. M. Klein, 1996). People expect to hear important information from their immediate supervisor or boss; line management carries more organizational muscle than staff positions and has a greater communications impact (S. M. Klein, 1996). The communication of the change path will be conducted through the incremental WG and then, from there, from immediate supervisors and managers to their own teams in the faculty advising offices.

Communicating the path of change can be broken down into prelaunch, launch, and postlaunch stages (Burke, 2018). The prelaunch phase captures building awareness and the key concepts of equity, efficiency, and the use of technology (Burke, 2018). Launching the plan will involve communications around the change implementation plan and will be received by the RO central degree audit team, advising staff in the faculties, associate deans, and students. The incremental WG will be pivotal to achieving clear communication for the path of change, celebrating all milestones and wins that are accomplished. In follow-up and in conjunction with using this WG, it will also be important for the champions to continue communicating the path of change, milestones, and wins achieved in their own unit meetings. Hearing these messages delivered more than once in a variety of settings will be a necessity. OntarioU could use other materials such as electronic brochures, newsletters, or bulletin boards to communicate with stakeholders on a regular basis. A key to successful strategic communications will be to use the faculty colleagues who are mentoring others. Having staff hear these messages directly from a colleague executes on an important element of strategic communication (Heide et al., 2018) and will be critical to the overall success of the plan.

Achieving milestones and generating short-term wins, Kotter's (2012) sixth step in the change process, would be key pieces to communicate to stakeholders and participants. Communicating milestone achievements to stakeholders allows the WG to keep the academic advisors informed about the benefits of the project to them and to students (S. Brown, 2014). Using the incremental WG as the means through which to communicate, all milestones and short-term wins should be celebrated to carry momentum towards the end goal.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Following the completion of this OIP, the change implementation plan will begin, with focused conversations that will concentrate on the degree audit tool and why staff are not using it. Stage 1 will be executed fairly quickly, gathering the associate deans together and setting the stage of the inequitable access that exists for students. I have had small group conversations and one-on-one meetings with many associate deans already, and once I shared the current degree audit usage data and the research on retention, they were on board. These initial conversations lead me to believe that I will be ready for Stage 2 shortly thereafter.

Stage 2 will be executed on shortly after the associate deans have provided their support, which will be to dedicate biweekly meetings over 2 months to sit down with associate deans, undergraduate program directors, advisors, and students to better understand the needs of each constituent group. Moving forward in any way will require surfacing and understanding the challenges faced by staff, issues they see with the degree audit tool, and underlying attitudes about the use of technology for advising. I see staff engagement as the most important step in the change implementation plan. My perception is that staff have chosen not to use the tool because they felt excluded from the original implementation process and change plan, and obvious missteps occurred in the communication strategy, which have all led to misconceptions that persist today.

Being passionate about service delivery should come with a passion for continuous improvement. The fundamental principle of the PDSA cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009) is built on iteration. If the organization continually seeks to review core pieces of its student service delivery model and buys in to the constant need for feedback and assessment, then the framework for continuous improvement using the PDSA cycle will have been achieved (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015). I am optimistic that the results of both the monitoring and evaluation plans will be used together to guide subsequent revisions of the plans (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Throughout this doctoral journey, one of the important learning points I have taken away is paying closer attention to the monitoring and evaluation plans in the planning stages.

Thinking through the communication strategy for this OIP has challenged how I conceptualize messaging. Beatty (2015) reminded me that communicating change is tough work, and it should not be an afterthought. Change agents should think through issues in advance to ensure that stakeholders will listen to difficult messages, question old assumptions, and consider new ways of accomplishing things to achieve stated goals. Going through this exercise of thinking through the communication plan has given me reason to reflect on whether communication has been well thought out in advance of other changes that have been made in the portfolio in the last 18–24 months. In future, strategic communications will be a larger part of the planning process for me prior to embarking on change, and I intend to remind others whose decisions impact my operation to reflect on this component as well. It is one thing to make a decision at one level, but when another team has to execute and implement that decision, the communication strategy needs to reflect both the office whose authority is required to make the decision and the team who needs to operationalize the change. This idea speaks to the reality of having varied communications for varied audiences that attend to different needs.

Given the focus on equity in this OIP, I look forward to continuing to find opportunities to provide staff development in social justice (Theoharis, 2007). HEIs have equity, diversity, and inclusion frameworks in place; this OIP provided a small-scale opportunity for me to feel engaged with institutional priorities, and I would like that to continue for me and the staff in my portfolio.

Although the successful execution of this OIP involves a number of first-order changes (Kezar, 2018), I am optimistic that the collateral hope this work brings to OntarioU is in fact a culture change: a culture change that is reflective in the attitudes that academic advisors present in their work and in their continued focus on technology to enhance the student experience. Although I will not be engaged in second-order change (Kezar, 2018) throughout the journey of implementing this OIP, I am hopeful that this will be one of the outcomes.

Narrative Epilogue

This written work is a manifestation of sheer will and determination. I have persevered through many life circumstances to see this document come to fruition. I have had the pleasure and privilege to be a part of many organizational change plans, but writing this OIP has given me a greater appreciation for the importance of acquiring multiple perspectives on issues, even when I think I may know what they are. Providing people with the opportunity to be heard and to express themselves is worth the time spent. I envision greater buy-in on projects if colleagues believe that they have had the opportunity to be heard. Capitalizing on shared values and beliefs to create a shared vision is something I have always been proud. Articulating it in theory and writing about it in this OIP have been rewarding and have reminded me that I have chosen a path in life that I enjoy and that I can excel at.

This written work has also reminded me that people are important to me; we accomplish much more when we work in teams than we can on our own. Valuing and engaging colleagues was likely what drew me to use stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010) as the overarching framework in this document. I will always be grateful through this OIP of the stark reminder that being true to who I am as a leader, as a person, and not compromising on my values and integrity will be critical to any change initiative that I want to pursue. Even generally speaking, having an authentic and transformational approach to leadership is a natural fit with a focus on equity for students. I look forward to continuing the journey of lifelong learning.

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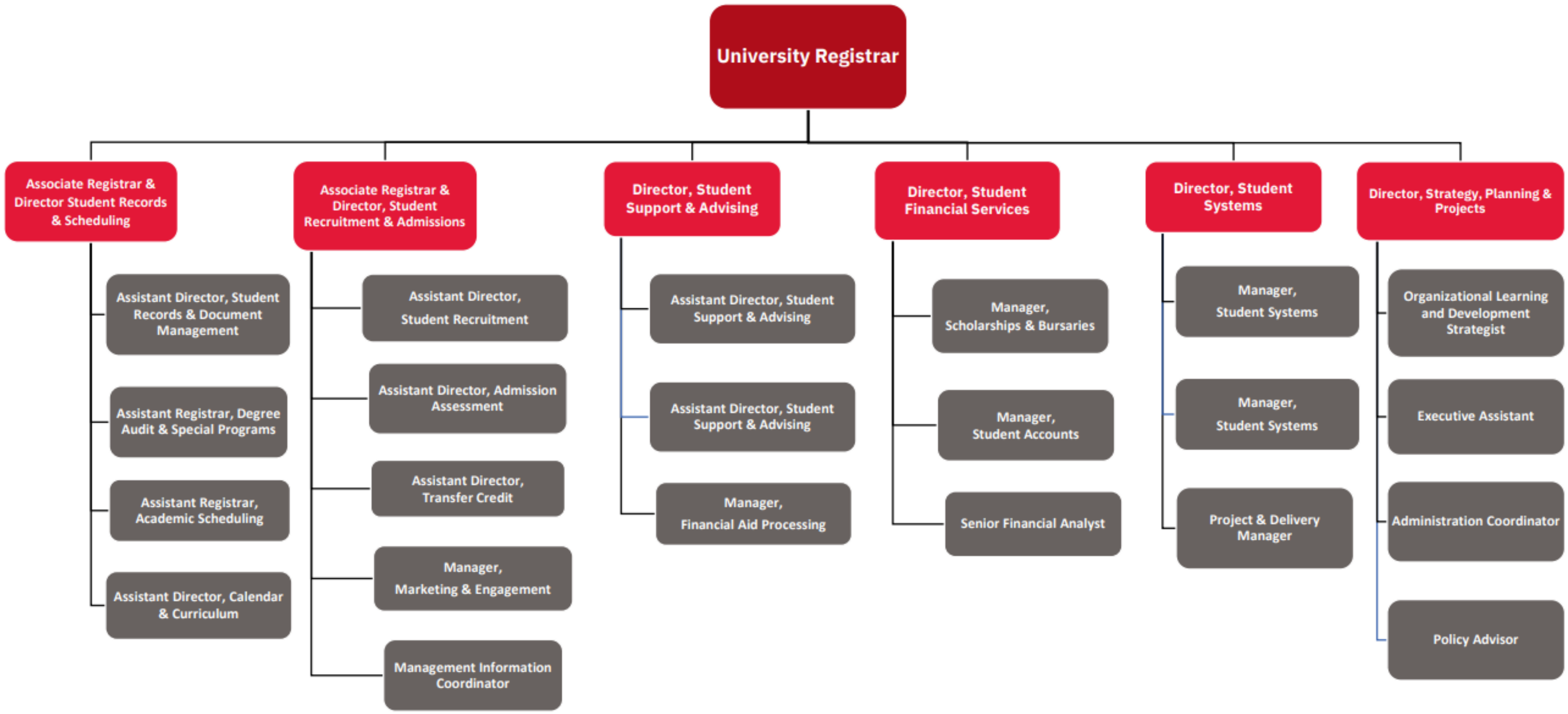
Appendix A: Organizational Chart of OntarioU's RO



Appendix B: Change Readiness Survey

Readiness factor	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Planning					
1. The team has clearly articulated a shared vision for the project.		X			
2. Our vision is linked to key systemic and or institutional priorities.	X				
3. We have scanned the campus for other related projects, programs, and initiatives that already exist to which the new project might connect to or leverage.	X				
4. We have created a project plan with identified actions, milestones, and an achievable timeline.	X				
5. We have identified possible pitfalls in roadblocks.	X				
6. We have a plan for helping stakeholders e.g. faculty, students, and bracket understand what is happening, the purpose and desired outcomes (e.g., forms, town hall meetings, communications plan, professional development).		X			
7. We have an assessment plan and the capacity including needed expertise in institutional research offices to measure and analyze results.			X		
8. Our assessment plan is linked to project outcomes and leverages existing data sources.	X				
9. We have identified appropriate resources and facilities required to carry out the project.		X			
10. We have created a project budget.			X		

Readiness factor	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. We have identified sources of support both internal and external (e.g. Grants gifts in-kind donations).			X		
12. We have it inventoried key policies that may impact implementation of the change and have plans for adjusting them.		X			
People/leadership					
13. We have a team comprised of the appropriate administrators, faculty, and staff with needed expertise. There is multi-level and shared leadership.	X				
14. Leaders at different levels understand the role they need to play to move the change forward. (If not, we have a plan for educating leaders about their roles.)		X			
15. We have senior administrative support for resources, rewards, and other key motivational and policy issues.		X			
16. The project has several leaders/champions. It is not reliant on one person.	X				
17. We have identified and hired a project manager who has the time and expertise required.					x
18. People involved in the project have the time, incentives, motivation, and expertise to successfully carryout goals of the project.		X			
19. If additional professional development or training is required, we have identified what is needed and have a plan for providing it to project faculty, staff, and students.		X			
20. We have identified external experts required to help campus leaders, faculty, students, and staff build plans, develop expertise, and/or evaluate results.			X		

Readiness factor	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. We have identified and informed key on- and off-campus stakeholders.		X			
Politics					
22. The project has support of the president, provost, deans, and other key administrators.	X				
23. Political issues that we may encounter have been identified, including relevant policies or procedures, committee/departmental approval processes, incentives and rewards, and allocation of resources and space.	X				
24. We have buy-in from on-campus stakeholders.	X				
25. We have strategies for addressing the identified political issues.		X			
26. We have leveraged external messages to create urgency for the change.		X			
Culture					
27. We have examined the underlying values of the proposed change and identified the degree of difference from current values to understand dissonance.	X				
28. We have conducted a survey (or held extensive conversations) to understand resistance, understanding, and values related to the proposed change.	X				
29. We have developed documents that clearly articulate the proposed change to inform stakeholders and ensured they have been reviewed and read.		X			
30. We have attempted to connect the proposed change to existing values on campus.	X				
31. We have examined ways to create new symbols, stories, or rituals to embed the change.			X		

Readiness factor	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
32. We have created a narrative or story to capture and articulate the change to stakeholders.		X			
33. We have a plan for how we will communicate and celebrate project results. The plan should include both on- and off-campus sources as well as dissemination opportunities (e.g., published papers, conference presentations).	X				
Sensemaking and Learning					
34. We have an understanding of how stakeholders view the proposed change.	X				
35. We have a plan for ways we can help bridge the gap between current knowledge and needed knowledge.	X				
36. We have a plan to get appropriate data to different groups that need to engage in learning.		X			
37. We have developed our data capacity and knowledge management systems to supports the change.			X		
38. We have training and support around data use and interpretation so data can be used to inform decisions needed around the change.		X			

Note. Adapted from *How Colleges Change: Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change*, by A. Kezar, 2018, pp. 255–259. Copyright 2018 by Routledge.

Appendix C: Sample Survey Questions

1. Have you started using the degree audit tool?
2. If not, please explain why?
3. If yes, have you noticed that student questions related to their degree requirements have decreased?
4. Do you believe that increasing usage of the degree audit tool addresses an issue of equity for students?
5. Were adequate resources made available to achieve your objectives?
6. Do/Did you feel that you had access to ongoing training and support during the project and after the project was over?