

# SEI Strategic Planning Approaches

Source: Stephanie Chasteen and Wieman (2017)

PDF and editable Word version: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/seihandbook/chapter/supplemental-documents/>

This document provides some strategic planning resources and questions for planning an educational initiative at the department level. While these lessons are drawn from the Science Education Initiative (SEI), they can apply to educational change initiatives.

## Useful resources for strategic planning

[\*\*Increasing Student Success in STEM: A Guide to Systemic Institutional Change\*\*](#) (Association of American Colleges & Universities, Elrod and Kezar, 2016). This guidebook is a very valuable guide through the process of leading change, including setting priorities and shared vision.

[\*\*Improving How Universities Teach Science: Lessons from the Science Education Initiative\*\*](#) (Harvard University Press, Wieman, 2017). Several sections of the book, particularly Chapters 1 (Vision) and Chapter 2 (SEI Model), will be useful for departments and initiatives in planning their work.

[\*\*Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education \(PULSE\)\*\*](#) has several resources for assisting departments in the change process.

[\*\*SWOT Analysis: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats.\*\*](#) A very useful tool for understanding the landscape of your department and identifying productive directions.

[\*\*TheoryofChange.org\*\*](#) provides resources for explicitly defining how your initiative is expected to achieve its results (your “theory of change.”)

[\*\*Achieving Systemic Change: A Sourcebook for Advancing and Funding Undergraduate STEM Education\*\*](#) (Association of American Colleges & Universities, Coalition for Reform of Undergraduate STEM Education, 2014). This publication provides recommendations for higher education on achieving systemic change.

[\*\*How Colleges Change\*\*](#) (Routledge, Kezar, 2014). A useful and practical guide to systemic change in higher education, including obstacles to change and scaling up change initiatives.

## Planning your initiative

Considering your initiative as a whole (i.e., a cross-departmental project), how will you structure the initiative overall? Few people are likely to fully adopt any initiative model (such as the SEI); when making modifications or creating your own structures engage in some careful visioning and rationale for that structure. This will pay off in the future.

## Questions to consider during the program planning phase

### How will you structure the program?

Can you leverage familiar structures (teaching and learning centers) and mechanisms (competitive grants, committees) for your program? How will you ensure that departments work together to form consensus, instead of lone faculty leading change? How will you fund the program and the central organization at a sufficient level? How will you make changes to this structure over time as you learn what does and doesn't work? How stable is the central organization?

### **How will you engage departments?**

How will you create a sense of urgency for change? Is funding at a sufficient level to garner attention among competing priorities? Does your program involve an adequate number of faculty and departments to generate a sustainable culture shift? How might you leverage commonalities across departments?

### **How will you incentivize faculty?**

What level of accountability do faculty have for teaching outcomes? Are you providing sufficient incentives to generate interest and action? How will you leverage human factors, such as personal satisfaction in teaching? How will you counter the negative influence of the formal incentive system? How will you address the lack of time allotted to teaching?

### **How will you guide the work?**

How will you give clear structure, timeline, and outcomes? Will faculty be provided with the necessary expertise and labor to complete the work? How will you celebrate positive results and small wins? Have you built in adequate time to allow gradual adoption of innovations by faculty?

## **Departmental planning**

You may benefit from thinking about how your educational change initiative fits with the ecosystem of your department and how to best leverage the existing resources and structure. Below are a set of questions to consider at the departmental level during the planning phase.

### **Questions to consider during the planning phase in a department**

- How ready is the department for change? What other initiatives (e.g., departmental review) have happened recently or are upcoming and would influence this new initiative? Do you have a small corps of faculty who can lead this change?
- How can the initiative align with the dominant values, culture, and priorities of the department and faculty?
- Are there ways to leverage familiar structures and mechanisms already used by the department? For example, are there any committees that would provide a natural home for discussion or oversight of this new work?
- What level of accountability do faculty have for their teaching outcomes?
- How might you counteract any negative influence of the formal tenure/promotion/evaluation system and the lack of faculty time through incentives?
- How do faculty view course ownership? Is there a sense of departmental ownership of courses or do individual faculty feel that they have autonomy in designing their course or section? Is this autonomy in terms of how they teach (pedagogy), what they teach (curriculum), or both?
- Can you provide clear structures, timelines, and outcomes to faculty?
- What is the timing of the work? When will initiative-specific personnel (such as postdocs) leave, and will they leave on various schedules?
- Are there ways to do a small pilot test of a course transformation project to generate short-term positive results and small wins?
- How might you allow for gradual adoption of innovations by a broad set of faculty?

#### **Questions for department faculty:**

1. What would success look like for this (departmental) initiative, in your opinion?
2. What do you want your department to look like? What are the problems in the department?
3. What are the biggest challenges in your courses?

Some activities which may help you to answer these questions include: discussing the project at faculty meetings, holding meetings individually with faculty, and identifying a faculty leader to begin planning and discussing the project with faculty and facilitating a faculty working group to provide input the departmental project (see our separate documents on facilitating such groups at <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/seihandbook/chapter/supplemental-documents/>).