



Entrepreneurial Leadership Drives Critical Cultural Change

CASE STUDY

DRIVING CRITICAL CULTURAL CHANGE

THE CHALLENGE/SITUATION

The Department of Nutrition Sciences at The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) has some of the most accomplished, smart and talented educators, researchers and clinicians in the field. However it lacked optimum engagement and collaboration needed to grow successfully. Department members were accustomed to working independently in their specific areas of expertise in education and research.

Newly appointed, Chair, Dr. James O. Hill, knew that cultural change was needed to identify a successful future for the Department, strengthen its reputation and increase the impact both at UAB and nationally. However, how best to do that was unclear.

He engaged culture change expert, Gayle Lantz, CEO of *WorkMatters*, to help create the needed shift and reinvigorate the department.

Galvanizing the Department was a top priority.

Gallup research shows that 70% of employees in the US are disengaged. ¹Executives rank collaboration as the #1 factor having the greatest impact on their organization's overall profitability. ²Collaboration also improves teamwork and innovation.

WHAT WE DID

We held a department-wide visioning kick-off session with a broad range of stakeholders including educators, researchers, clinicians, students, & staff focused on the positive, not the problems.

- Through an appreciative approach and guided discussion, participants learned new ways to think about change.
- Shared highlights of individual experiences which helped create collective aspirations for the department. The event enabled them to begin building relationships and awareness about issues that mattered most to department members.
- Throughout the project, we received useful input, feedback and ideas based on one-on-one conversations representing a cross-section of stakeholders.

"I like feeling a part of something bigger...doing work that matters."

Gayle served as a **"go-to resource"** to share expertise and make recommendations throughout the project as needed. She worked with Dr. Hill and other key leaders and stakeholders as identified.

THE RESULTS

In just three months, the Department is reporting impressive progress, including:

- The launch of "innovation teams" in three key focus areas: **Communication**, **Mentorship** and **Collaboration**
- Instituted dynamic monthly "round up" meetings to ensure full **visibility of special projects, critical needs** and **collaboration opportunities**
- Team members report **significant positive change** and believe they're headed in the right direction

Specifically they report:

- Better internal **awareness/understanding** of the work performed by colleagues in different areas
- Stronger sense of **ownership/accountability** among Department members
- Improved **student onboarding processes** where students feel known and part of something important from the start
- Organic **collaboration** that doesn't feel forced—increased openness/receptiveness to ideas
- More **opportunities for involvement** in different Department projects and University events
- **Strengthened mentorship** among faculty and students
- **Better sharing of resources** to improve efficiencies and save cost
- Increased **engagement** among people from all ages, roles, disciplines
- A **"We're all in this together"** shared attitude growing
- A more **fun** work environment

"It's great to see natural synergies happening in the department."

The department still faces challenges related to budget/financial constraints and workspace limitations. However, they will find innovative solutions over time.

The impact is expected to be significant, affecting the number and quality of students attracted to the University and increasing potential revenue generation.

Additional innovations and improvements are on the horizon.

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE...

Members are thinking big about the potential impact they can make at UAB and the greater community. Examples include: developing undergraduate programs, online learning and service to the community, telemedicine possibilities.

Some day people will say... "Who would of thought people are coming to Birmingham, Alabama for weight loss?"

UAB's Department of Nutrition Sciences will continue to make a difference within their clinic and community—promoting good health and improving lives.

LESSONS LEARNED

CREATING CHANGE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE DIFFICULT.

It requires leadership that is open to new ideas, a willingness to engage a diverse group of stakeholders differently.

POSITIVE ENERGY ACCELERATES MOMENTUM.

Focus more on people who want to be a part of creating something new, better--those with a positive attitude. Worry less about naysayers.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES GET BEST RESULTS.

Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Be willing to adjust as you go.

Inspired change works. Don't try to force change. Tune in to what people care about. Start by asking the right questions.



UAB is an internationally renowned research university and academic medical center.

The Department of Nutrition Sciences comprises more than 20 primary full-time faculty members and more than 90 staff, students, and postdoctoral fellows. The faculty includes a multidisciplinary team of physician-scientists, Ph.D scientists, registered/licensed dietitians, and nurses working together in patient care, research, and education programs.



We help mission-driven CEOs, C-Suite executives and other senior leaders revitalize their teams to inspire innovation, attract/retain top talent and gain a competitive edge.

For over 20 years, CEO Gayle - an award-winning author, speaker and culture expert - has helped leaders reshape their organizations, inspire change and create positive impact in the lives of those they lead and serve.

Ready to reignite innovation and realize the full potential of your team? Let's talk!

Contact us at admin@workmatters.com or visit workmatters.com

¹Gallup State of the American Workplace Report (Feb. 2017) ²Raconteur and Google for Work (2015). Collaboration is good for business.