

Leadership Transformation Self-Assessment

From balancing competing priorities to navigating conflicts and silos, the demands on your time, energy, and expertise can feel overwhelming as a higher education leader. This Self-Assessment provides a framework for assessing your current leadership practices and identifying opportunities for growth and empowerment across **The Chronicle's Leadership Transformation Collaborative's** four focus areas. Each section provides insights to help you identify where you currently stand and where you aim to go in your leadership journey.

1

Balancing Competing Priorities for Time and Energy

How can I make more time for what matters most, lead with intention, and avoid burnout when the day-to-day demands are constantly pulling me in different directions?

2

Developing the Art of Conflict Foresight

What strategies can I use to anticipate and proactively address potential conflicts, before they derail our progress and erode morale?

3

Navigating and Working Across Silos

How can I foster genuine collaboration across silos, tapping into the collective wisdom of our institution to drive meaningful change?

4

Leading and Empowering Others in Times of Uncertainty

What leadership approaches will enable me to empower my team, provide stability, and inspire a shared vision, even in the face of change fatigue and ambiguity?

1 Balancing Competing Priorities for Time and Energy

Typical Challenges

"I worry that there's no sustainable way to meet my job demands and also take the necessary steps to develop the new systems, strategies, and talent for my institution's future. I'm drowning in back-to-back meetings and emails. The 'doing more with less' environment makes it increasingly difficult to spend time on anything that isn't currently on fire. Despite my best efforts, I often feel like I'm falling short on both immediate tasks and long-term goals."

Gaining Ground

"I've developed strong delegation skills and feel confident about my strategic priorities. Unfortunately, time that I reserve for strategic thinking frequently gets interrupted by the 'crisis du jour' — and there seems to be a new one every day. In theory, I know the optimal use of my time, but getting there is another matter. Resilience is key as I navigate these interruptions and strive to stay focused on my long-term goals. I have some practices in place to renew my energy and avoid burnout, but I'm still seeking more strategies to handle the new challenges in the year ahead and beyond."

Empowered State

"I have a clear understanding of my strategic priorities and I allocate my time and energy accordingly, revisiting these periodically as conditions and needs around me keep shifting. Unexpected challenges still emerge, but I generally consider myself more proactive than reactive. When I need to shift my time unexpectedly for urgent matters, I have the systems in place to ensure these do not throw things off track. I am considered a model by colleagues for maintaining regular practices to renew my energy, avoid burnout, and protect time for strategic priorities. This increases my overall satisfaction with my work."

2 Developing the Art of Conflict Foresight

Typical Challenges

"In today's fractured environment, I'm constantly bombarded with tensions from all directions. Stakeholders are skeptical, and conflicts seem to arise everywhere, from one-on-one conversations to group discussions about contentious issues and change initiatives. I feel unprepared for and exhausted by the sheer volume and intensity of conflicts. These constant conflicts often drain my energy and affect overall morale. We all want the best for our institution, but I wonder about how to be more proactive to ensure greater collaboration."

Gaining Ground

"I'm engaging in more open conversations with my team and/or stakeholders to address underlying tensions early on, and I feel relatively confident in my ability to manage tough conversations. However, it still seems like the major change initiatives we're trying to drive forward are stalled or sabotaged by conflict. Sometimes I see team members arguing without listening; other times I worry they're 'biting their tongues' and not raising key challenges we need to address. Despite these ongoing challenges, I'm seeing some positive changes and feel encouraged by the initial progress, but I realize there is still a long way to go."

Empowered State

"I understand and help others see how conflict is not just a barrier, but is also an essential ingredient to growth and innovation. My colleagues and I have established a culture of trust, which helps prevent tensions from building up. I have cultivated relationships and practices to develop my 'conflict foresight' so that I'm rarely caught off guard and can help ensure that 'healthy conflict' doesn't devolve into 'high conflict.' This proactive approach strengthens our team's resilience, cohesion, and ability to achieve true transformational change."

3 Navigating and Working Across Silos

Typical Challenges

"I worry about how much silos are impeding our institution's strategic goals -- it's like that old adage of the left hand not knowing what the right is doing. There are so many bottlenecks, duplicated efforts, a lack of cross-functional communication, and missed opportunities for collaboration. We all complain about silos, but it's often unclear even among leaders who can do anything about the challenges."

Gaining Ground

"I do my best to break down silos, such as by initiating cross-departmental meetings, projects, and information-sharing. However, it's still challenging to get everyone on the same page, especially when existing departmental priorities clash. I leverage informal networks and strong interpersonal relationships as often as I can, but building and maintaining relationships with colleagues seems more difficult these days. For example, we don't have the informal 'coffee chats' as everyone is so busy and often distributed across locations. Sometimes it feels like there are a small number of us battling silos on our own. We still have a long way to go."

Empowered State

"I'm proud to say that our silos operate in harmony, much like a well-coordinated symphony, rather than as isolated experts. We've established clear decision-making frameworks, communication channels, and regular cross-departmental meetings to ensure more efficient collaboration and productively address friction. Staff and leaders at every level understand the roles of different teams and feel empowered to collaborate to strengthen the institution's mission. We're all working together to drive transformational change and make everyone's jobs easier during challenging times."

4 Leading & Empowering Others in Times of Uncertainty

Typical Challenges

"I worry about how change fatigue, uncertainty, and constrained resources make it difficult for everyone to stay on track and feel secure. My team looks to me for answers I don't always have, and it's hard to maintain a sense of stability when everything around us is in flux. At every level of the institution, it feels like we need to develop new competencies to face today's challenges, and I often feel too stretched for time to support and develop those I manage, especially as I evolve as a leader as well."

Gaining Ground

"I make a conscious effort to be transparent, celebrate wins, create open lines of communication, and involve my team in problem-solving and decision-making. Despite my efforts to communicate clearly, sometimes things get lost in translation when the team is stressed. What others 'hear' can be very different than what I intended. I've mapped my team's skill gaps and have a plan to support them, but feel alone in this work and wonder about what else I can do to get them to the next level. I'd like to enhance how I support and inspire a range of colleagues (such as different layers/levels on my team or staff that don't report to me where I need to use 'soft influence')."

Empowered State

"I take a strategic approach to talent management, development, retention, and succession-planning. If I manage multiple layers, I'm intentional about my role in stewarding talent at all levels, without micro-managing. I've prioritized the well-being of my team, ensuring they have the support needed to navigate complexity and change. My proactive leadership approach not only enhances my team's performance and resilience but also contributes to the broader institution's ability to adapt and thrive amidst uncertainty. I am seen as someone who doesn't just get the job done, but also manages vision and purpose and inspires others across campus."



The Chronicle's Leadership Transformation Collaborative will spend more time on each of the four focus areas, providing expert insights, practical tools, and community to support your leadership journey.

Take a moment to reflect:

For each focus area, what elements from the "Typical Challenges," "Gaining Ground," and "Empowered State" statements resonate with your current experiences and/or your future aspirations as a leader?