

ChangeMaker Mindset Implementation Task Force

Midyear Report – December 2021

Membership:

Chair: Keith Holland

Members: Daniel Beers, Sarah Brooks, Terry Fernsler, Steven Harper, John Hathcoat, Bryce Hayes, Patrice Ludwig, Aaron Noland, Ben Selznick, Jonathan Stewart, April Temple, Jordan Todd

Charge: In Spring 2019, the Innovation Mindset Task Force was convened to consider how to integrate elements of the innovation mindset throughout the JMU curricula. The resulting report, delivered in May 2020, notes that although faculty and students already engage in pedagogy and other activities that develop this mindset, these activities are not always acknowledged as such. The report recommendations intend to connect and strengthen work already occurring across the curriculum to foster a distinctive JMU ChangeMaker brand that sets our graduates apart in the 21st century.

Building upon these recommendations, the ChangeMaker Mindset Implementation Task Force is charged with pursuing the three tracks of Building Infrastructure, Supporting Existing ChangeMakers and Long-term Programmatic Integration to incorporate and sustain the innovation mindset learning objectives across the JMU student experience.

Summary of Current Semester Activity:

- The task force convened monthly meetings throughout the Fall 2021 semester.
- On July 20 – 23, 2021, six task force members (Patrice Ludwig, Ben Selznick, Keith Holland, Jonathan Stewart, Aaron Noland, and Sarah Brooks) attended the 2021 AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work (ISLW). During the four-day workshop, the team received guidance and feedback to develop an action and implementation plan for the ChangeMaker Mindset initiative. Throughout the workshop, the team was encouraged to ensure diversity and equity responsiveness within the implementation plan.
- At the start of the Fall 2021 semester, the implementation plan developed at the AAC&U ISLW workshop was presented to the task force.
 - Feedback on the draft implementation plan was sought from stakeholders throughout campus.
- Following feedback, discussion, and revision the task force initiated the implementation plan by initiating three working groups:
 - Student ChangeMakers
 - This working group was organized to conduct focus-groups among students who have engaged with or identify as ChangeMakers.
 - The working group will examine the experiences, barriers, outcomes, and perceptions of student involvement in innovation and change making.
 - By December 2021, this working group developed a plan for soliciting student participation and for conducting the focus group activities.
 - Faculty & Staff ChageMakers

- This working group was charged with initiating a community of practice among institutional champions and supporters of change making initiatives to articulate experiences, barriers, and perceptions among faculty and staff.
 - By December 2021, a plan for initiating faculty and staff focus groups in the Spring 2022 semester was developed.
 - ChangeMaker Partners
 - Internal and external partnership are required for developing a ChangeMaker culture throughout the institution. This working group is tasked with studying the value proposition of the ChangeMaker Mindset initiative to internal and external partners (e.g., employers, prospective students, etc.) and identify opportunities for funding to support the ChangeMaker mindset initiative.
 - By December 2021, several internal partnership opportunities were identified and explored. As feedback is obtained from the other working groups, external funding opportunities from public sources and private foundations will be further examined.

Future Work Planned:

- The established working groups will continue implementation of plans developed in the Fall 2021 semester by:
 - Student ChangeMakers
 - Obtaining IRB approval for conducting student focus-groups
 - Conducting student focus-group activities
 - Collecting, summarizing, and reporting findings to the task force
 - Faculty & Staff ChangeMakers
 - Initiating a community of practice among faculty and staff
 - Identifying opportunities and challenges associated with implementation of ChangeMaker mindset programming for students
 - Collecting, summarizing, and reporting findings to the task force
 - ChangeMaker partners
 - Identify funding opportunities to support ChangeMaker initiatives
 - Develop communication strategy to articulate ChangeMaker mindset to external partners
- Prepare and present findings and initial recommendations to Academic Council and the President's Cabinet, demonstrating alignment of the ChangeMaker Mindset initiative with strategic priorities.
- Prepare an action-oriented report that articulates specific findings from each working group and suggests future action steps to scaffold the continued development, growth, and continuation of the ChangeMaker Mindset initiative.

Appendices:

- *Draft* ChangeMaker Mindset implementation plan developed as a result of participation in the 2021 AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work (ISLW). This draft, originally developed in July 2021, continues to be revised and modified by the task-force based on feedback and findings from the working groups.

James Madison University
AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work
ChangeMaker Taskforce
Prepared July 23, 2021

Introduction

As a final exercise resulting from participation in the summer AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work (ILSW), a subset of the JMU ChangeMaker Taskforce who attended the workshop was asked to generate and present an action plan. In the following sections, we first offer the conceptual framework motivating our action plan rooted in both ecological models (e.g., Hanski 1998) to understanding student-centered organizational change within postsecondary institutions (e.g., Renn & Arnold, 2003) as well as important take-aways from the institute relative to institutional readiness (Budwig, 2021; Vaz, 2021) and inquiry-based, relationship rich learning (Felten, 2021). We then offer a proposed action timeline which incorporates three nested time-horizons: Fall 2021; CY 2022; Future.

Part I: Conceptual Foundations

Overarching Foundations

Throughout the workshop, we developed several important conceptual foundations that are instrumental to our action plan. These will be more specifically articulated with respect to each area, though a few general overarching themes merit presentation:

Alignment of Visions: We identified that the vision and mission articulated in the ChangeMaker document aligns well with the stated goals of the 2022-2026 JMU Strategic Plan. We propose a slightly revised articulation of ChangeMaker vision as follows:

JMU ChangeMakers enact positive transformation in their organizations and communities using an equity mindset guided by principles of ethical reasoning and social responsibility.

This is well aligned with several institutional visions articulated in the recently revised University strategic priorities, values, goals and plans. Notable alignments include:

University Strategic Plan, Priority #1 – Being the Change at Work and in the World

We will be an innovative engine powering student lifelong learning and providing the skill sets and solutions that education, business, government, and other constituents have come to expect from JMU as we are truly being the change.

University Strategic Plan, Goal 4B: The faculty will model interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to learning as pathways to innovation, knowledge creation and problem-solving in our complex environment.

University Strategic Plan, Goal 7C: The University supports students' skill development through engaged learning.

We place particular emphasis on these articulations as they are new to the 2022-26 plan (https://www.jmu.edu/jmuplans/_docs/Strategic_Plan.pdf), reflecting an enhanced degree of institutional readiness over-and-above existing goals supportive of ChangeMaker.

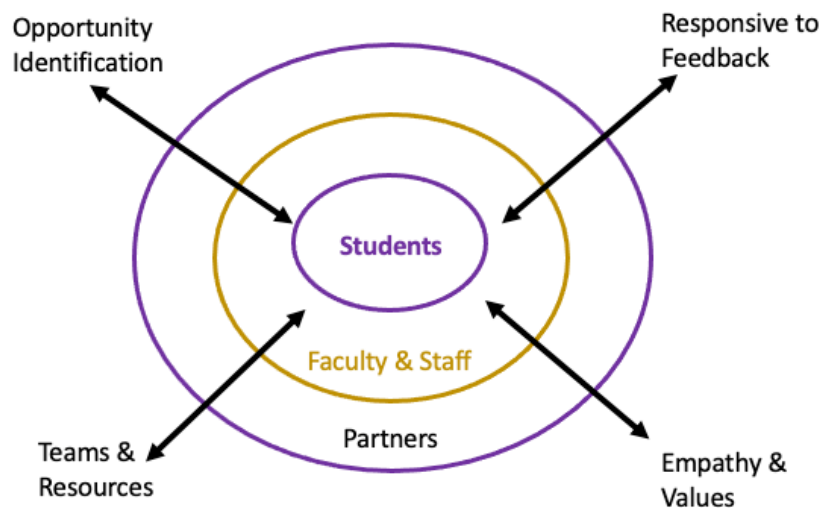
DEI/QEP: The JMU Changemaker project will play a key role in making James Madison University, historically and in 2021 a white-majority institution, a more equitable and inclusive learning community: one where all students are empowered to initiate change, including change that brings greater equity for themselves and for others. **The capacity to change our community for the better will enhance students' sense of belonging, a key feature in supporting and retaining students of diverse backgrounds.** Such efforts are especially important to consider given the recently approved QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan), of which ChangeMaker is featured though not centered.

Exemplar-Leading Strategy

To ensure that we build upon existing work and begin to demonstrate the inclusive, yet distinctive principles of ChangeMaker in action, we will initiate our work through an exemplar-leading strategy. We have identified several existing curricular (e.g., UNST 300, JMU X-Labs, ICI, CISE Capstone, AAAD) and co-curricular (e.g., CSL, CMSS, ICCE/GCFE, MYMOM) locations where ChangeMaker mindset objectives reinforced through integrative learning efforts are well underway.

The ChangeMaker Ecosystem from a Position of Equity

In proceeding with this work through our existing Taskforce infrastructure, and as an initial mechanism for framing this work to external stakeholders, we propose an interconnected and dynamic ChangeMaker ecosystem from a position of equity. Visually, we represent this as demonstrated below:



The team will recommend *equity-minded practices* as central in strengthening our learning community and democratic society. We will also recommend the addition of a 5th student

learning outcome that focuses on student belonging and understanding JMU as an equitable learning community

We now briefly explain our model.

Students: As an institution committed to high-quality teaching and community engagement, the center of our ecology is students. Ensuring that students have not only the knowledge, skill, and abilities associated with being a ChangeMaker, but also the **metacognitive awareness of those abilities**, is vital to this effort. We note as well that by students, we mean *all* students.

Faculty & Staff: Provided the curricular and co-curricular aspects of this project, we envision teaching faculty – inclusive of tenure-track and non-tenure-track educators – and staff (e.g., student affairs personnel) as a key element and the primary delivery mechanism for our efforts.

Partners: We envision partnership in a broad sense, which can include internal partnerships (e.g., academic and student affairs; accessing internal resources), community partnerships (e.g., problem sponsors, community, and service learning), and external partnerships (e.g., foundations, granting organizations, corporate sponsors, international collaborations).

Dynamic Axes

The four dynamic axes in our model reflect the four proposed learning objectives initially identified in the ChangeMaker report: opportunity identification, responsive to feedback, teams and resources, and empathy and values. Adopting a platform-based perspective on ChangeMaker (e.g., Heinrich et al., 2021), we consider that realizing such learning objectives for students **will only be possible when such outcomes are acted upon institutionally**. To that end, we recognize that various forms of formal and informal supports from administrators and administrative-facing constituencies (e.g., councils) will be required in progressing our work forward to achieve the ChangeMaker initiative. That said, *we strongly believe that it will be necessary to make institutional-level change in order to graduate ChangeMakers*.

Summary

In this section, we have articulated the conceptual foundation for our action plan developed over the course of the institute. We now propose a set of action steps anchored in this platform.

Part II: Timeline and Action Plan

Fall 2021

We remind that this work has taken place as a sub-set of a larger, cross-institutional taskforce. Thus, in the immediate term (e.g., first taskforce meeting of AY 2021-22) we plan to review this plan with our Taskforce colleagues for their feedback and input. We note, however, that some of the work of the Taskforce might be best achieved through the construction of three working groups:

Student ChangeMaking Faculty & Staff ChangeMaking Partnership ChangeMaking

At present, we have identified a core objective for each proposed working group to spearhead:

Student

Organize and conduct focus-groups among students who have engaged in curricular and/or co-curricular exemplars.

As noted by Peter Felten in our 1:1 consultation, two notes:

- Ensure representation from multiple experiences
- Ask students about ChangeMaker and see if it leads to exemplar experiences (or other possible experiences that could serve as or develop into exemplars)

Faculty & Staff

Initiate the meeting of a ChangeMaker community of practice among institutional champions who are leaders within the exemplar spaces. One outcome of this meeting will be the formation of a Community of Practice (e.g, Wenger, 1998).

Partners

Identify opportunities for internal and external funding to support ChangeMaker priorities. Plan and initiate processes to pursue identified funding.

Potential partners for Faculty and Staff development include our Center for Faculty Innovation because they have expertise and infrastructure to help organize our efforts and are equity-centered. The Student Affairs Social Justice and Inclusion Council and SAsPros professional development communities could also be ideal partners to reach administrative faculty.

Consider and map existing, potential, and “reach” (e.g., partners we’d love to have) partnerships for facilitating high quality student experiences.

As the work proceeds, the Taskforce, in conjunction with the AAC&U institute team, will also begin developing an initial communication platform connected to ChangeMaker.

Calendar Year 2022

Looking into the 2022 calendar year, we see both general opportunities and five possible “targets” for the work.

Target 1: Action-Oriented Taskforce Final Report

The target most within our immediate control would be for the existing Taskforce to successfully complete its 2-year implementation assignment by:

- Articulating specific findings from each working group (student focus-group data, communities of practice formation, partnership pursuits) in the final report.
- Mapping out future action steps for ChangeMaker which scaffold continued development, growth, and continuation of the initiative, including mapping these activities to the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

Target 2: Public ChangeMaker Presentation

We would like to have a public presentation toward the end of the Spring 2022 semester to showcase exemplars of the ChangeMaker initiative. We believe there may be appropriate (and possible funding) for such work through our partnerships with the Major ICCE Lab / Gilliam Center for Entrepreneurship.

Target 3: BoV Presentation

We would like to present ChangeMaker to the JMU Board of Visitors during the 2022 calendar year. The emphasis of this presentation would be on clearly and closely articulating how ChangeMaker is integral to achieving strategic priorities and goals presented in the 2022-26 Strategic Plan.

Target 4: 2022 Orientation Program

A fourth target would be to have ChangeMaker embedded throughout the 2022 new student orientation, thereby raising its profile among incoming students and beginning to build a student-level culture connected to ChangeMaking.

Target 5: Open Funding Stream(s)

By the end of 2022, we hope to have opened one or more funding streams dedicated to ChangeMaker efforts. These might include: procuring internal grants/development funds, applying for and winning external grants, collaborating with donor relations to unlock philanthropic funding streams, and other possible avenues.

Of course, additional targets may (and likely will) emerge. We will review and revise after the fall 2021 semester.

Future

As Mike Tyson has said, and COVID has taught us, “everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face”. On that ethos, we hesitate to articulate specified longer-range plans than our current 18-month window. However, we offer that our efforts progressing into 2023 and beyond will need to engagecore questions that emerged for our team during the working group:

- What is/can be/should be the *scale* of ChangeMaker efforts?
- To what extent can students’ development as ChangeMakers be documented (e.g., through assessment, the use of e-Portfolios, intelligent tracking systems, etc.)?
- Is ChangeMaker leadership and management better left distributed (e.g., many willing partners) or centralized (e.g., appointing a ChangeMaker AVP)
- What levels and locations of institutional “buy in” will be required to sustainably support ChangeMaker?
- How does ChangeMaker intersect with other campus-wide initiatives, including General Education?
- How does a ChangeMaker educational experience attract the students of tomorrow?
- How do we center equity in ChangeMaker activities?

These are not questions we can or should attempt to answer at this juncture, though we include these in our action plan to reflect that we have considered and will continue to engage these vital considerations.

Conclusion

We present this action plan on behalf of the JMU Team attending the 2021 ILSW. We learned a lot and have deeply appreciated the opportunity to collaborate, learn, vision, and plan.