Fostering Innovation, Creativity and Sustainability at Millersville University

Millersville must innovate to continue to inspire learners despite fiscal and operational constraints, but our organizational models were designed primarily to value and support efficiency and continuous improvement, not to inspire and adopt innovative, creative or sustainable ideas. Inspiring and adopting new ideas may require deliberately fostering innovation.

The Innovative Project Life-cycle: Plan and Perception vs. Reality

1) Millersville innovates, but innovating is typically more challenging than we plan for or acknowledge retrospectively.

Why is Innovating so Challenging?

2) One reason may be that our traditional operating system (TOS) is set up to create efficiency and continuous improvement, but not to inspire and adopt, or foster, innovative ideas.

Where do Innovative Ideas Come From?

3) Innovative ideas typically come from individuals or groups of individuals that create solutions by adapting to the situation at hand or by confronting a challenge they face. This is an adaptive operating system (AOS).

Great Idea, but Does it Fit?

4) When the AOS brings the innovative idea to the TOS, the TOS may not know how to adopt it. This can create the perception that the TOS is rigid or bureaucratic and/or that the AOS is unrealistic, which hinders progress and deters future efforts.

Is it Possible to Foster Innovation?

5) Through iterative planning and an active dialog between the TOS and AOS, we can guide innovative ideas through their life cycle to shape them into something that fits existing organizational structures.

Questions to Consider

How can we create flow between the TOS and the AOS? How can they interact more productively? How can we discuss trade-offs in ways that are principled and understandable to both systems? How do we encourage the idea-development journey while still meeting performance expectations?