



# Changemaker Institutions

How Higher Education Can Use  
Social Innovation to Better Prepare  
Students, Transform Campus Culture, and  
Lead Society toward a Better Future

Ashoka U, 2018.

© by Ashoka U 2018. Changemaker Institutions is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 license (international): <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

ORDERING INFORMATION: To download a PDF version of this publication, order additional print copies or arrange for a bulk order please visit: [http://ashokau.org/changemaker\\_institutions](http://ashokau.org/changemaker_institutions), or email [ashokau@ashoka.org](mailto:ashokau@ashoka.org).

Printed in the United States of America on Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper. First Edition. 2018.

# About Ashoka U



Ashoka U catalyzes social innovation in higher education through a global network of entrepreneurial students, faculty, and community leaders.

Ashoka U is an initiative of Ashoka, the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs. Building on Ashoka's vision for a world where Everyone is a Changemaker, Ashoka U takes an institutional change approach to impact the education of millions of students. We collaborate with colleges and universities to break down barriers to institutional change and foster a campus-wide culture of social innovation and changemaking.

# About the Authors

## Marina Kim

Marina is a pioneer in social innovation in higher education and has made this field her life's work. She co-founded Ashoka U in 2008 with Erin Krampetz, and together with Beeta Ansari, grew Ashoka U's team to eleven people with a budget of over \$1.5 million.

Marina is a sought-after speaker and thought leader. Her writing on institutional change and higher education innovation has been featured in Forbes.com, SSIR.org, and the *Diversity & Democracy* journal. She has spoken at events around the world and worked with higher education leaders in the US, Mexico, Canada, Hong Kong, and Korea. Marina was named in the Forbes 30 under 30 for Social Entrepreneurship and was named an Honorary Fellow of the University of Northampton. Marina holds a BA in International Relations from Stanford University.

## Erin Krampetz

Erin Krampetz co-founded Ashoka U with Marina Kim & Beeta Ansari. Under her leadership, Ashoka U's reach grew to over four hundred colleges and universities around the world. Erin ana-

lyzed best practices across the Ashoka U network, and visited firsthand more than thirty of the leading institutions in social innovation education.

She is the author of *Rethinking College Admissions: A Social Innovation Approach*, and a contributing author to the Ashoka U Curriculum Guide. Today, she serves on the board of Watson University and the Amani Institute, and continues to spark innovation across disciplines. Erin holds a BA in International Relations and an MA in International Educational Administration and Policy Analysis from Stanford University.

## Beeta Ansari

Beeta is a founding member of the Ashoka U team, and currently serves as Ashoka U's COO. In addition to leading Ashoka U's strategic planning and organizational design, Beeta has also played a seminal role in building the Ashoka U community and capacity building efforts.

In 2010, Beeta launched the Ashoka U Exchange and has since grown it into the premier conference for social innovation in higher education. Going into its eighth year, the Exchange has now engaged over 3000 higher education innovators from 300 colleges and universities around the world. Beeta also led the launch of the Commons, an online professional development program for changemaker educators and institutional innovators. Beeta holds a BS in Economics from Southern Methodist University.

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	13
Introduction .....	16

## Chapter 1:

Higher Education Needs a New Model .....	24
Social Innovation: Skillset and Strategy for Institutional Change .....	25
Looking Back before Moving Forward .....	27
What Is a Changemaker Institution? .....	28
Elements of a Changemaker Institution .....	31

## Chapter 2:

Activating Leadership for a Changemaker Institution .....	36
Navigating the Dynamics of Institutional Change .....	37
Building Your Change Team .....	38
Stewarding a Change Process, Rather Than Owning It .....	44

## Chapter 3:

Changemaker Institutions in Action . . . . .	46
Long-Term Commitment to Institutional Innovation . . . . .	47
Tulane University: Case Study of a Defining Moment . . . . .	49
Best Practices of a Changemaker Institution . . . . .	54
Strategic Benefits of a Changemaker Institution . . . . .	58
Looking Forward: We Are Part of a Bigger Picture . . . . .	64
Next Steps . . . . .	68
Acknowledgments . . . . .	70



# Preface



We assume that, because you are making time to read this strategy brief, you share our belief in the transformative power of higher education. Like you, we believe that colleges and universities play an important role in serving the needs of students, employers, communities, and the world.

But today's environment is one of rapid change and forces us to ask if our current system of higher education is doing enough to prepare tomorrow's leaders and solve tomorrow's problems.

At Ashoka U, we believe that the world needs colleges and universities to reimagine how they can prepare twenty-first-century leaders to thrive in today's environment. For us, this starts with becoming a Changemaker Institution.

Changemaker Institutions prepare students to thrive in a world where rapid change is the norm. They are purpose-driven organizations in all respects, and unlock their assets to support their community. Rather than embodying disciplinary silos and rigid hierarchies, they model an open and adaptive approach that sparks innovation and creates space for everyone to contribute.

This approach not only allows institutions to be leaders in social

change, but also improves recruitment efforts, student-learning outcomes, and generates new funding opportunities.

So how does this culture change happen? From our decade of doing this work, we've come to believe that social innovation is the ideal framework to support this transformation. Social innovation is a methodology for social change with elements of systems thinking, solution orientation, innovation, scale, financial sustainability, impact measurement and assessment, and collective impact. At a college or university, this means that social innovation is more than just an educational offering. It can be applied as an institutional innovation approach that guides leadership decisions, organizational strategy, culture, and operations.

Of course, there is a risk associated with a strategic shift of this magnitude. But the risk of *not* innovating is even greater.

**If you build a culture of change and a practice of strategic evolution, the relevance of your institution will grow faster than ever.**

In this strategy brief, we will share the approach we have refined through our work with over four hundred colleges and universities around the world. We will discuss how to use social innovation as a mechanism to change your institution and as a new lens to provide students with relevant, real-world education.

We believe that as more institutions take up the mantle of social innovation, higher education as a whole will look dramatically different. This realignment will then allow higher education to

maintain its place as an essential pillar of society today and in the future.

We call on campus changemakers to step out of their institutional corners and help lead in new, powerful, and more visible ways.

Are you with us?

**Marina Kim, Erin Krampetz & Beeta Ansari**

**Ashoka U Founding Team**



# Introduction

“Universities, it seems to me, should model something for students besides individual excellence.... They should model social excellence as well as personal achievement.... If institutions that purport to educate young people don’t embody society’s cherished ideals—community, cooperation, harmony, love—then what young people will learn will be the standards institutions do embody: competition, hierarchy, busyness, and isolation.”

—*Professor Jane Tompkins*, DUKE UNIVERSITY



W e are writing this as co-founders of Ashoka U, an initiative we launched in 2008 as part of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public. Ashoka was created in 1980 by Bill Drayton, who launched Ashoka with the goal of creating a worldwide movement of social entrepreneurship. Since then, Ashoka has developed a footprint in more than 90 countries and has elected more than 3,300 social entrepreneurs into its network.

Ashoka's mission has recently expanded beyond designating exemplary social entrepreneurs. Ashoka's current focus is on creating a world in which everyone can be a changemaker, where no matter your age, background, or education level, you can contribute positively to the world in personal and professional contexts.

---

**A changemaker  
is someone who  
has found the  
self-permission to  
advance change  
for the good of all.**

At Ashoka U we believe higher education is a key driver to achieving this vision. Society's future leaders are trained in our higher education system. Students are often in a formative period of their life. Their personal and professional identity is shaped during their university and college experience, setting up the contribution that they will make (or fail to make) across their career.

If we want our future to be one where solutions outpace problems and where everyone believes they can contribute, then we need young people—especially those who will be in positions of power—to master and apply the core changemaker skills of empathy, collaboration, creativity, and systems thinking. A true changemaker education creates an environment where these attributes are modeled and celebrated. Students are given an opportunity to practice these changemaker skills and embody them throughout their college or university education.

## Ashoka U envisions a higher education sector where colleges and universities

- ▶ feel a responsibility to create positive social impact as part of and beyond core institutional operations.
- ▶ cultivate students as changemakers with broad-based skills in systems thinking, empathy, collaboration, and creativity.
- ▶ are adaptive, resilient, innovative, and collaborative organizations, increasingly breaking down traditional silos and hierarchies.
- ▶ invest in new structures and norms that increase multidisciplinary, cross-campus collaboration, blending of theory and practice, and integration with local communities.
- ▶ actively seek to apply their knowledge, assets, and resources in service of social impact.

# Our goals at Ashoka U include

- ▶ providing higher education innovators with the skillsets and mindsets to drive institutional change and lead changemaker education initiatives;
- ▶ demonstrating that higher education institutions can rewire themselves into more innovative organizational forms; and
- ▶ supporting colleges and universities to embrace a dual mission of delivering a high-quality education and creating societal good.

So, what does this look like in practice?



***To create a community of innovators that are transforming higher education, we host the annual Ashoka U Exchange.***

This global convening brings together 700 participants from 150 colleges and universities representing 30 countries.



***To support the continued learning of these innovators, we offer the Ashoka U Commons.***

The Commons acts as an online professional development program for faculty and staff engaged in social innovation education initiatives. Over the course of a semester, participants are grouped into small cohorts and supported by a coach as they work to advance a core component of social innovation education (such as creating a new course or mapping student learning journeys) at their institution.



***Finally, we designate a diverse global group of institutions—both public and private, large and small—as Changemaker Campuses.***

These institutions set the standard for the broader Ashoka U network and serve as role models for the field. They do this by sharing program experiences and a new vision for higher education as a transformative force for social change. Changemaker

Campuses must pass a rigorous multistep process that assesses their offerings against rigorous institution-wide criteria. An external judging panel makes the final decision regarding the designation. Successful applicants are positioned as thought leaders for social innovation and changemaking in higher education. As of September 2017, over forty colleges and universities across nine countries are recognized as Changemaker Campuses. After designation, Changemaker Campuses measure and communicate the impact of this work, serve as ambassadors of this movement to encourage others in the development of their changemaking ecosystems and programs, and innovate new models that push higher education forward.

Drawing on years of working with colleges and universities through the programs mentioned above, Ashoka U has created a strategic framework and methodology for institutional change. Our experience dealing with change—including ambivalence and resistance to change—in higher education has helped us crystallize key principles to guide institutions as they embrace social innovation as a core organizational value.

Our hope is that these insights help you navigate the uncertainty and challenges certain to emerge in any institutional innovation endeavor.

CHAPTER

1

*Chapter 1:*

# Higher Education Needs a New Model

## Social Innovation: Skillset and Strategy for Institutional Change



The world is changing. We live in a fluid, fast-paced, and on-demand world. Societies that were once oceans apart are now completely interconnected; jobs are being created (and eliminated) at record rates; and innovation is a buzzword that has fully infiltrated our vernacular.

Even though today's world has many positive attributes, we must recognize that there are vast swaths of the population who feel completely isolated. Many of the societal problems (e.g., joblessness, homelessness, poor health care, income inequality) that existed a generation ago are still rampant today.

This calls into question several issues: What does it mean to thrive in this society? What are the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment? How does one make an impact on the world? If this rate of change continues or escalates, how can all organizations stay at the forefront of innovation?

Social innovation offers a twin benefit for higher education. As an educational framework, social innovation has the power to develop relevant twenty-first-century skills in students. As an approach

to institutional change, it can also rewire the institutional ecosystem to become more innovative, resilient, relationship-oriented, and responsive to the needs of its core constituents and the community within which it is embedded.

We believe that higher education is uniquely equipped to prepare learners of all generations with the hard and soft skills required to lead and to drive long-term change. We envision a sector comprising “everyone a changemaker” higher education institutions characterized by interdisciplinarity, new models of hands-on education, active engagement with on- and off-campus stakeholders, and leadership and innovation opportunities infused across the organization.

Ashoka U also enables higher education institutions to instill the core tenets of social innovation into their institutional design since it offers a new way of bringing the values of social and environmental impact into the institutional change process.

When colleges and universities begin to move from traditional to more innovative ways of operating, higher education will be able to better sustain its influential position as a pillar of society. Higher education will remain a key venue for preparing future leaders and be able to better employ its assets to address pressing social and environmental challenges.

This chapter will address in more depth what a Changemaker Institution is, what elements are most important to keep in mind in institutional design, and why an institution might make this a core element of its long-term strategy.

## Looking Back before Moving Forward

The current structure of higher education was set up in the late 1800s and early 1900s to meet the needs of the industrial economy. Concepts of hierarchy, efficiency, productivity, and standardization harken back to a world where the goal was to ensure that human effort yielded a maximum return. A scientific approach to managing organizations took hold, and factories, assembly lines, and industrial quotas began ruling the management philosophy. In this model, one could control, plan, and predict growth.

Carried forward more than one hundred years, the dominant teaching and learning model of higher education has not changed or evolved much. The way in which classrooms are currently set up and how lectures are given still reinforces industrial-age thinking, with a goal of students emerging as fully formed “products” of many years of schooling.

This model of higher education is designed to prepare students for success in a world that in many ways no longer exists. It also shows that traditional university structures often tend to become rigid, bureaucratic, slow-moving, and averse to change, which puts higher education at risk of being out of touch with the needs of society and becoming increasingly less relevant as the world changes.

The world ahead is one of rapid changes, so it is no longer enough or perhaps even responsible to continue educating students for the same outcomes and skills that were relevant even a decade ago. As an educator and higher education leader, are you and your colleagues preparing your students for the world that *will be* or the world that *was*? Are you preparing them with the

skills to navigate a world where the careers they are preparing for may no longer be viable when they graduate?

We must ask ourselves the following:

- ▶ ***What are best practices for how higher education can prepare students for a world of change and complexity?***
- ▶ ***What are new models for organizing institutions to be more adaptable to current needs and inevitable future changes?***
- ▶ ***What are smart incentives that can be leveraged to increase collaboration and innovation across disciplines?***
- ▶ ***And finally, what can we do to put all members of the institution to work to be part of driving the next evolution of needed changes in higher education?***

## What Is a Changemaker Institution?

Our experience supports the idea that higher education should seek to align with the world at large. Students recognize and feel inspired when universities deliver on their promises and practice what they preach. ***Therefore, we believe that all colleges and universities can (and should) embrace social innovation, both as an educational framework and as a strategy for institutional change.***

## ***Social innovation is a methodology for social change with elements of:***

- ▶ Systems thinking
- ▶ Solution orientation
- ▶ Innovation
- ▶ Scale
- ▶ Financial sustainability
- ▶ Impact measurement and assessment
- ▶ Collective impact

At the core of a Changemaker Institution, social innovation is used as a methodology to strategically evaluate how institutional resources and human capital can be deployed to create social, environmental, and economic value. All stakeholders add value because they operate within a culture that encourages problem-solving and creativity at all levels, challenging the assumption that only those with formalized power can contribute in a meaningful way. Each person takes responsibility for solving problems and making progress—leading as *agents of change*, rather than *reacting to change*.

***As an educational framework***, the social innovation competencies we aim for students to learn and apply include the skills of empathy, collaboration, creativity, open communication,

systems thinking, deep research, risk-taking, and leadership. These are combined with dialogues about understanding the link with civic engagement, the roots of social problems, and the formation of students as changemakers.

***As a strategy for institutional change***, faculty, staff, students, and administrators need to examine policies, practices, and culture at every level. Practices should embody the institution's social and environmental consciousness, including, but not limited to, procurement processes, institutional investments, and hiring procedures. The institution can encourage a culture in which everyone leads and contributes, each voice is valued, and information is shared transparently in an accessible and inspiring manner.

An institution driven by the changemaker ethos leads by example and actively shares its learning and best practices with others. It participates in collaborations with other institutions and community partners, while measuring its impact and sharing results to advance the field of social innovation in higher education.

# Elements of a Changemaker Institution

For nearly a decade, through our deep partnerships, Ashoka U has been part of a multi-institutional learning lab for institutional change. Many of the design principles, strategies, and methodologies mentioned throughout this strategic brief were drawn directly from the lessons learned at Changemaker Campuses.

Yet we recognize that this movement is much bigger than just over forty colleges and universities. To truly bring higher education into the twenty-first century and meet the needs of today's students, every institution must embody social innovation as both an organizing approach and as an educational framework.

The following are four critical levers to help accelerate change across an institution of higher education: (1) embodiment of institutional values, (2) culture, (3) hierarchies and disciplines, and (4) curriculum and co-curriculum. Adopting social innovation design principles during the change process makes it more likely for institutions to be open to change and collaboration, with ideas coming from everywhere and from anyone.

The following table outlines a series of design principles for becoming a more innovative and entrepreneurial Changemaker Institution. By applying the design principles outlined in the Changemaker Institution column, each of the structures listed in the Higher Education Lever column can be morphed from a barrier to change into a driver of change.

## TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION

## CHANGEMAKER INSTITUTION

### EMBODIMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

The organization seeks to embody excellence in teaching and research. Advocates for living social and environmental values are sprinkled across the organization and often only have scope in small domains, but development of these values rarely becomes a pervasive, institution-wide effort.

The organization systematically embeds social and environmental values into its core strategy. The consistency of organizational values is clear in communications to external and internal stakeholders, in how institutional assets are deployed for community betterment, in how procurement investments are made, in how mutually beneficial relationships are formed with community partners, and in how the institution measures its success and the success of its stakeholders.

### CULTURE

Institutional change tends to be slow, and new ideas are likely to be rejected. Status is defined by titles, credentials, and seniority. Longevity, tenure, and expertise equate to greater insight.

New information and insights will frequently spur institutional change and ongoing improvements. Experimentation and creation of new ideas and models are celebrated and encouraged. Everyone is given a voice and is respected, and ideas are welcomed from anyone with insight, regardless of age, seniority, or title.

## TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION

## CHANGEMAKER INSTITUTION

### HIERARCHIES AND DISCIPLINES

There are established hierarchies among administrators and faculty with ensuing tensions over decision making. Faculty members have a fair amount of autonomy but are beholden to institutional tenure and promotion practices, which tend to reward research and publishing within the members' discipline. In many cases disciplines are reinforced, and crossing disciplines requires additional work and multiple layers of approval.

Hierarchies exist but are fluid. While senior-level administrators have power to make decisions, there exists a collaborative, participatory approach to seeking input from students, staff, and faculty. Collaboration between faculty and staff is frequent and organic. Disciplines are an effective way of advancing and sharing domain knowledge and expertise, but multidisciplinary structures are also encouraged and designed to strengthen and support more collaborative research, teaching, and learning.

### CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULUM

Once created, curricular and co-curricular programs tend to evolve very incrementally. Control is based on the disciplinary or functional leadership hierarchy. There tends to be resistance to significant or frequent innovation or change.

Curricular and co-curricular programs are always dynamic, evolving, and improving. Educators and program leaders regularly evaluate effectiveness and ask how they can improve student learning and educational outcomes. Faculty and staff are open to more experiential, engaged approaches to teaching and student leadership development. The curriculum gives students the opportunity to have specific disciplinary and industry knowledge, as well as adaptable skillsets and competencies relevant in changing and uncertain contexts.

***We believe this institutional design of living the values in a more intentional way will lead to long-term success because it increases the capacity for the institution to be adaptive, innovative, and resilient, now and into the future.***

Evident throughout these organizational design principles is a commitment to the community, both on-campus and beyond. Decisions are intended to model ethical organizational practices, such as fair hiring, procurement procedures, and strong environmental policies. New programmatic innovations are created for students that improve their ability to become effective and innovative changemakers in the world.

In summary, a Changemaker Institution embraces a new way of operating through both shared and distributed leadership and a values-oriented approach to managing organizational operations and designing educational programs. We believe that all colleges and universities can start down the path of becoming a Changemaker Institution today by creating new organizational habits and rewarding behaviors that result in transformational cultural, structural, programmatic, and leadership outcomes.

CHAPTER

2

*Chapter 2:*

# Activating Leadership for a Changemaker Institution

## Navigating the Dynamics of Institutional Change



Adopting changemaker institutional design principles is easier said than done. It is infinitely harder to change what already exists than to start from scratch, especially with long-entrenched cultures, structures, and operational methods. However, the potential for shifting resources within a large, well-respected institution can lead to results at a much larger scale than a start-up.

The most effective approach to creating a Changemaker Institution in higher education involves simultaneous engagement from the top-down and the bottom-up, and bridging from the middle. Change processes led by only a single group, such as the senior leadership group or student body, will take longer, will be less likely to create long-term sustainable changes, and may even have negative consequences.

The high level of autonomy in the academic system includes significant departmental and faculty freedom, meaning that top-down decrees need to be navigated with care. In a university environment, a top-down approach that is perceived as a forced mandate and doesn't use a process to ensure buy-in, will face resistance and may be perceived as a threat to long-standing institutional

practices. A lot is at stake for academics who have built their careers on expertise in a particular discipline and who gain recognition and resources based on existing power structures.

Meanwhile, an approach that activates forces of collective engagement and builds roles for many people to be included in the change process can lead to dramatic change. By respecting and leveraging the decentralized power structures, change can happen more rapidly and with more transformational results than in other industries.

The secret to successfully bringing these elements together is in the human relationships that are built and undergirded by trust. Institutional innovation requires building a team of stewards and advocates of the vision who can engage and bring along allies, partners, and collaborators across the entire institution.

## Building Your Change Team

Ashoka U's methodology is based on using leadership from all levels to make change across the institution. Relational capital, trust, and the ability to translate ideas across disciplinary boundaries and into domains that had previously been siloed and averse to any outside influence are key.

Thus, the essential element of deep and pervasive institutional change is having two or three Change Leaders with complementary perspectives and skillsets to build a campus-wide culture and network of allies. A subset of those allies can be activated to form the nucleus of a Change Team. Such a team requires a

smaller time commitment per person, but allows each to do their part to embed and to embody the values of social innovation into their respective teaching, research, and programmatic roles, which is key to spreading ideas in concrete ways.

All of this is supported by senior-level Change Champions, who give permission, a vision, and a mandate for the innovations and institutional realignments.

## Change Leader

Change Leaders are the glue holding all the pieces of campus change together. It is difficult for any real change to happen without a dedicated role to align efforts and channel energy into a clear direction.

Change Leaders are consensus builders who act from the middle—reaching up, down, and across the institution. They actively seek engagement, dialogue, and integration of social innovation ideas across disciplines, schools, and programs and apply these new ideas to the courses, programs, and culture in a deep and pervasive way.

Change Leaders can come from a variety of disciplines, from ei-

---

**Institutional innovation requires building a team of stewards and advocates of the vision who can engage and bring along allies, partners, and collaborators across the entire institution.**

ther faculty or staff positions, and the most effective leaders have an entrepreneurial track record and ambition to achieve impact at their institution and beyond. Change Leaders must be skilled at facilitating inclusive groups and empowering others to lead, rather than only seeking personal advancement.

Change Leaders must also exhibit persistence and belief in success despite the multiple obstacles they will inevitably face. One of the biggest challenges a Change Leader will face is navigating the complexity of the institution itself. Therefore, it is very important for Change Leaders to be comfortable dealing with college presidents and provosts, faculty, staff, foundation heads, investors, alumni, and students to drive new ideas and leverage the resources necessary to effect change at scale.

## Change Team

The most active allies across the institution become the core of the Change Team, which, along with the Change Leaders, pushes the frontiers of new models and new initiatives to embody the new institutional vision.

The Change Team's composition and size may vary depending on the institution's structure, size, and needs, but should include a diversity of stakeholders and perspectives, including students and community leaders. Unlike the Change Leader, who has an institutional focus, a Change Team member will have a specific focus for their leadership.

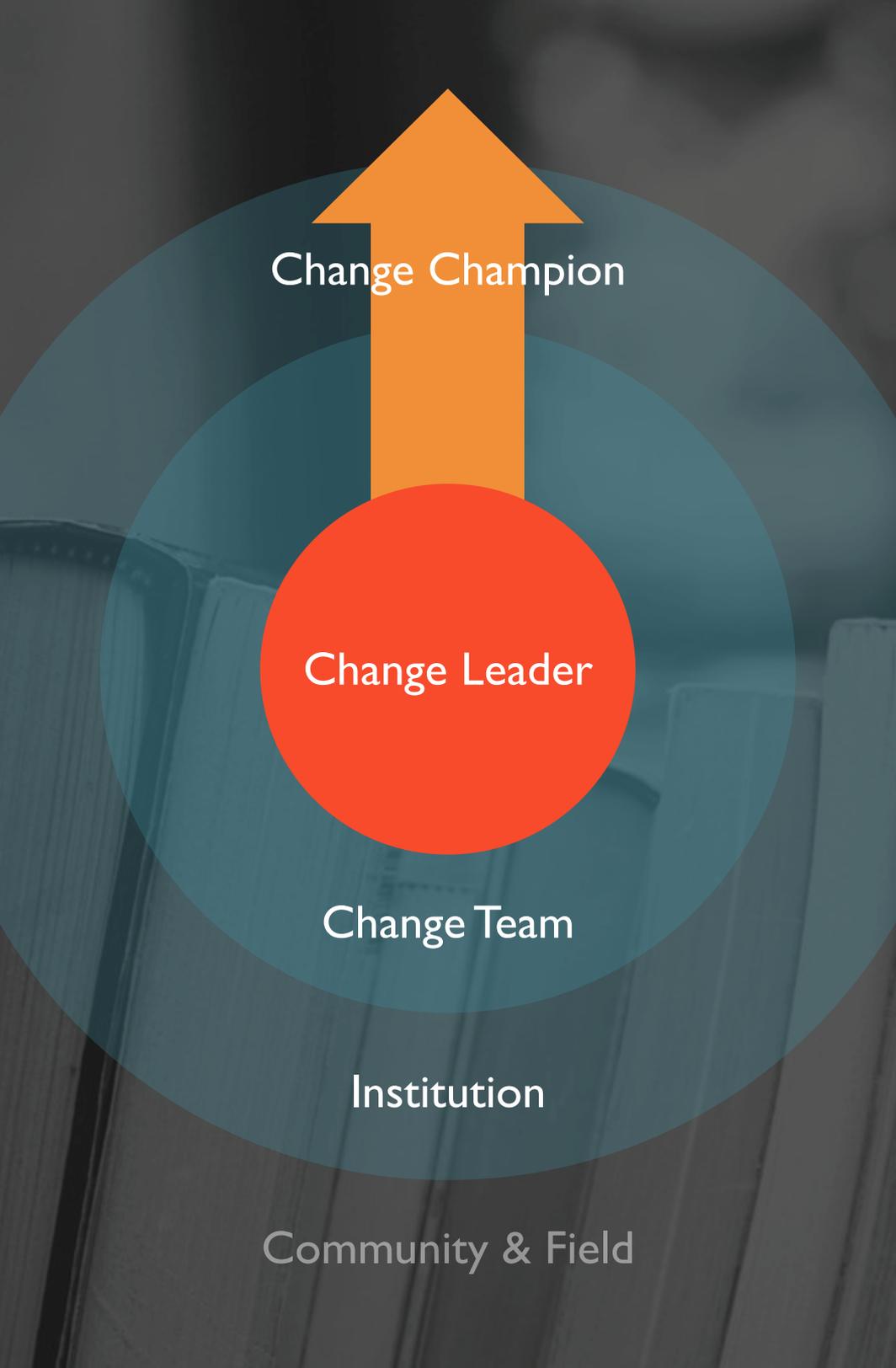
Educators of the Change Team might teach a course bringing

in concepts of social innovation or changemaking, researchers might investigate practices that lead to innovation in communities, and program managers might launch new social innovation initiatives within their center or institutional purview. Students and community members play a slightly different but equally critical role as advocates for innovative educational and partnership opportunities, and they may lead special projects and initiatives.

## Change Champions

All of this is, of course, supported and enabled with strong endorsements from senior leadership who signal that this is an institutional priority. Champions are key senior leaders and might be deans, vice-presidents, vice-provosts. They view social innovation and changemaking as a key strategy for the institution and actively promote social innovation education through their work.

They hold institutional authority beyond that of most faculty or staff members. They advance the vision of social innovation and changemaking by acting as advocates, dedicating financial resources, engaging key internal allies, and mobilizing support across the institution. In addition, key senior leaders can model and enable skills of new leadership and innovation in how they embed social innovation ideas into strategic plans, remove barriers to collaboration, and create structures that foster collaboration.



Change Champion

Change Leader

Change Team

Institution

Community & Field

# Change Leadership

## Champion = *Boundary Spanner*

- Senior Leader
- Chief advocate, both in and out of the university

## Change Leader = *Central Connector*

- Faculty, staff and/or administrators
- Have mandate to spread vision across university

## Change Team = *Interdisciplinary Drivers*

- Committed, interdisciplinary faculty, staff, administrators, students and community members
- Grow and strengthen ecosystem

# Stewarding a Change Process, Rather Than Owning It

To minimize the potential for turf wars or the danger of ideas becoming the darling for only one department on campus, it is crucial to build a strong, diverse team that represents a mix of roles, responsibilities, and perspectives.

Ideally, social innovation and changemaking are distributed and decentralized, and the ideas and application belong to the institution rather than the people leading it. When a program or initiative becomes institutionalized, there is a risk of it becoming siloed as a pet project and owned by a small number of people, rather than something that belongs to the entire institution.

The Change Leaders and Change Team are stewards of the idea, not the owners of the idea. Social innovation becomes an institutional asset that anyone can contribute to and/or benefit from, thereby enhancing the work of everyone across the institution.

The common thread tying all of these innovators together is a willingness to do what others in their position would not have expected or considered. Discontent with the status quo, they go above and beyond, both in terms of their own leadership and in their activation of others. For the change process to have integrity, it is critically important that Change Leaders, senior leadership, and Change Team members embody and model change-making behaviors themselves in order to help spread it as a new norm for many people at all levels.

Thus, when the ideas and behaviors become embedded and a part of the institutional ethos, the true power of a Changemaker

Institution is unleashed. It is the opportunity for continual innovation, deep relational trust weaving new links across boundaries of hierarchy and discipline, and a belief that institutional change is possible and, in fact, supported by key leadership. These are the hallmarks of an entrepreneurial, resilient, and collaborative organization that is able to adapt and respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise.

CHAPTER

3

*Chapter 3:*

# Changemaker Institutions in Action

## Long-Term Commitment to Institutional Innovation



shoka U envisions a global movement where higher education is responsive, adaptable, and impact-oriented, but we don't advise embarking on a change process without also investing in a serious way.

Taking on a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to embedding social innovation will result in a new campus culture and way of being—one in which students, staff, faculty, and partners feel respected and heard. Having an inspiring vision that is treated as a core institutional priority from multiple levels of the organization will ensure that stakeholders feel pride and ownership over these efforts, and see power within themselves in new ways. They will begin taking steps to improve the institution rather than waiting for someone else to do it, which starts a positive cycle of activating contributions from many different perspectives and areas of expertise.

Institutions that take a half-hearted approach to social innovation will undoubtedly have fragmented results and engagements, often benefiting a very small number of people and not making

any meaningful difference in the institution's reputation, brand, or culture. In fact, most of the risk from institutional innovation comes from under-investment, under-prioritization, and underestimating the amount of work it takes.

We've already shared some of the principles underlying Change-maker Institutions and our approach to change leadership, and now we'd like to paint a picture of what this looks like when it all comes together in an institution-wide approach. We'll present a case to illustrate this and then discuss further why implementing such an approach is an important investment and how you can leverage that for a variety of strategic institutional benefits.

# Tulane University: Case Study of a Defining Moment

The example of Tulane University paints a picture of what an entire social innovation ecosystem can look like. While we recognize that it took many years and significant financial and human resources to get Tulane where it is now, we encourage you to realize that you can begin transforming your institution today.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina rocked the state of Louisiana, and Tulane University, located in the heart of New Orleans, was forced to shut down and to evacuate its students. Many buildings, including the library, residence halls, and academic facilities, were under several feet of water. The university sustained over \$600 million in damages.

Tulane President Scott Cowen chose to remain on campus during the storm with a handful of essential personnel. After the storm had passed, he had a decision to make: shut down the university or rebuild from the bottom up. After some consideration and consultation with his leadership team and board, President Cowen realized that the fate of Tulane and the city of New Orleans were one and the same. Without affordable housing, schools, social services, and environmental protections, the people of New Orleans could not return home, nor would students be able to come back to campus. At that moment, he decided to reopen Tulane with an explicit focus on community engagement.

Ever since then, Tulane has been transforming into a real-world entrepreneurial and civic engagement laboratory. A new wave of institutional innovators has been unleashed to create new centers, programs, and curricular initiatives throughout the university to ignite social change and build sustainable ventures.



Tulane University

'05

Hurricane Katrina

'06

Center for Public Service

'09

Social Entrepreneurship Initiative

'11

Professors in Social  
Entrepreneurship

'12

SISE Undergraduate Minor

'14

The Phyllis M. Taylor Center  
for Social Innovation & Design  
Thinking

---

▶ In 2006, Tulane's Center for Public Service (CPS) made it possible for *every single* student to undertake meaningful service in greater New Orleans. Tulane was the first private research university to make service-learning (as one form of community engagement) a curricular requirement. Each student must take a minimum of two service-learning courses. Service work is integrated into courses, and in addition, students volunteer at food banks, create community art spaces, build playgrounds, teach English as a Second Language, and organize clothes and book drives, among many other efforts.

---

▶ In 2009, the university launched a campus-wide initiative to spur social entrepreneurship. Student-led programming was launched, which eventually included a social venture accelerator, a TEDx event, and chapters of national networks like Net Impact and Design for America.

---

▶ By 2011, philanthropic support led to the first five endowed Professors in Social Entrepreneurship across the curriculum—from the humanities and architecture, to natural, social, and health sciences. Now ten full-time professors contribute through research, teaching, service, and other efforts.

---

▶ In 2012, Tulane launched an undergraduate minor in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (SISE) to serve students across schools and majors. Many students working towards the minor, for instance, learn from youth at Grow Dat Youth Farm, which nurtures a diverse group of young leaders through the meaningful work of growing food.

---

▶ In 2014, building on these experiences, and thanks to generous funding from the namesake, Tulane launched the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking,

which integrates many of these programs. Human-centered design is a key part of the twenty-first-century toolkit for students, staff, and faculty to develop solutions for diverse social and environmental problems. On any given day, you might be inspired by social entrepreneurs at the NewDay Distinguished Speaker Series, engage in prototyping solutions with a design thinking class, chat with Taylor student fellows designing and communicating programs, and hear about post-doctoral research that led to an innovation toolkit to improve US government services.

The Taylor Center is an active and welcoming learning hub; it's a workshop and studio space for faculty, staff, and students across campus; it's a place for collaboration with community members and organizations.

Now, after a decade of programmatic evolution, many students are not just thinking about their major, but also the social and environmental problems they care about and their role in creating positive social impact. Stakeholders in the university are actively trying to break down the ivory-tower identity by engaging with people outside the university, locally and globally.

While it took a hurricane (and the resulting devastating human-made disaster) and an institutional existential crisis to spark significant change within Tulane, we encourage you to think about what you can do at your own institution. How might you begin infusing principles of a Changemaker Institution into your own institutional design? Are there people you can think of who might be a good fit for the role of Change Leader, Change Team member, or Change Champion? What is a first step you can take toward change?

# Best Practices of a Changemaker Institution

Our methodology for institutional change combines building deep and trusting relationships with leveraging institutional dynamics to sustain meaningful culture change. To ensure that you are focused on the most important elements as you begin to move in this direction, we urge you to heed the following advice:

- ▶ ***Embed social innovation DNA into your leadership and planning process:*** Whether you are a senior leader who is deciding whether to make this your legacy or you're a Change Leader who is advocating to get the senior leadership support you need, leadership matters in the case of meaningful institutional change.

Leaders need to model changemaking. The words, actions, and vision espoused by presidents, provosts, deans, vice presidents, and trustees can go a long way toward contributing to success. Institutionally, walking the talk includes investing in a process of institutional change, allocating staff roles to lead and enable a change process, and developing new skills for a cadre of educators, researchers, and program leaders who are the broad base of support.

For example, as a result of Change Leaders working closely with senior leaders throughout an institutional strategy process, the University of San Diego has incorporated “the practice of changemaking” as one of six strategic pillars in its 2024 strategic plan. This will catalyze key behavior change for campus stakeholders to work towards a measurable increase in the practice of changemaking.

- ▶ ***Provide incentives for a set of key, diverse stakeholders to engage:*** Often there will be a group of people who are inherently open to new initiatives and modes of operating, and another group who don't see how or why they should change from the status quo. For a campus-wide culture and behavior-shift of such magnitude to become pervasive, it's important to create ways to draw in otherwise-resistant folks. We have seen that providing public recognition for excellence and offering financial benefits for making changes is a powerful combination. This can include, but is not limited to, curriculum-development grants, offers to buy out faculty time to focus on new efforts that are aligned with the institutional vision, awards for innovation and leadership, and designated research funding.

For example, Babson College annually gives out Changemaker Awards that honor a combination of faculty, staff, students, and alumni who have demonstrated changemaking abilities over the course of their work. Receiving the award is an honor for the recipients but is also an awareness-raising opportunity, with a formal announcement and a public awards ceremony with key senior university leaders. For all involved, it also helps to build new identities as changemakers.

Marquette University has recently launched a "Strategic Innovation Fund" that provides significant resources and seed funds to students, faculty, and staff for ideas and research that can be translated to real-world application and impact. This has provided an additional pathway and a valuable incentive for research-focused faculty members who can otherwise be harder to engage in social innovation work.

- ▶ ***Design mechanisms for ongoing coordination and collaboration:*** Initiating and sustaining a campus change process requires ongoing effort and coordination among a variety of stakeholders and institutional departments. In addition to staffing that allows continued coaching, advising, and relationship-building with stakeholders across campus, we encourage other structures and mechanisms to build up confidence and capacity across campus.

For example, the University of San Diego's Changemaker Hub has no disciplinary home, but rather serves the entire institution. A hybrid staff and faculty director of the Hub meets with any student or professor who has an idea or wants to be involved in social innovation or social-change programming. The Hub also links with several institutional partners, such as the Mulvaney Center for Community, Awareness, and Social Action as part of their campus-wide Changemaker Core Committee, which brings together key faculty and staff who embed social innovation into their work and teaching across multiple disciplines.

- ▶ ***Physical space matters:*** Large amounts of money are poured into designing and maintaining buildings and grounds on a regular basis. While culture, curriculum, leadership, and staffing are huge drivers of change, physical space is an overlooked resource. Indoor and outdoor space can drive the values of changemaking into action and promote creativity, collaboration, empathy, reflection, teamwork, and innovation if designed intentionally.

The University of Northampton is in the midst of a new \$500 million building project, which will entirely redesign the

campus and its facilities, based on the principles of change-making. It will include plenty of open, creative, collaborative space; rooms that are flexible for a variety of pedagogical approaches; and space for faculty, staff, and students to mix and work together on equal footing outside of classes.

Arizona State University put a stake in the ground with the launch of Changemaker Central, a space *for* students *by* students, which is designed to be an engagement and support hub. Students can get information and mentorship regarding social change and innovation initiatives, and can do so in a space that can be used for student projects, team-building, and prototyping ideas.

▶ ***There's a learning curve—plan for it and fund it:***

For an institution to best prepare students as future change-makers, we must recognize that there is also a learning curve for faculty and staff who are teaching and modeling behavior for the students. This learning happens most swiftly as a result of the regular practice of new behaviors and values when launching programs, courses, and institutional initiatives. It can also happen through professional development opportunities including conferences, professional networking, and certifications.

This is often the most overlooked investment. However, it can make a huge difference in how pervasive an effort becomes across campus and how confidently people lead innovations within their respective domains. We recommend budgeting for professional development opportunities for core leaders to gain the necessary skills and knowledge. In addition, you should plan incentive funding for Change Team members who

are looking to launch new initiatives but want to learn about existing models in other institutions.

Don't forget that senior leaders also have learning curves, since this is often new terrain for them as they navigate a multitude of stakeholders into a new strategic and institutional framework. Many of our Changemaker Campuses send senior leaders—including presidents, provosts, and trustees—to attend the Senior Leaders' Track at the annual Ashoka U Exchange, which allows them to connect with senior-level peers, learn about other institutional change case studies, and apply field-level trends to their own campus context.

## Strategic Benefits of a Changemaker Institution

Looking across our network of campuses, we have observed some key benefits that result from campus-wide institutional innovation and social impact work. Some of the key forces that affect higher education include brand positioning, student and faculty recruitment, funder engagement, regional influence, and student preparation for the job market. We touch on these as they pertain to an institution's competitive advantage:

- ▶ ***Develop your institution's brand, identity, and value proposition in an intentional and values-driven way:*** Align institutional norms and strategic communications with a new way of operating, rather than just inserting a few new courses and co-curricular initiatives.

- ▶ ***Attract prospective students seeking an action-oriented, purpose-driven education that prepares them for uncertain job markets:*** Becoming known for providing a changemaker education has been a key driver of admissions interest at the University of San Diego. In a recent survey, 52 percent of incoming first-year students signaled that the university's reputation as a Changemaker Campus was key in motivating them to attend (it was an important or the most important reason). At Tulane University, student applications tripled post-Katrina, concurrent with the implementation of a university-wide public commitment to make serving the community in engaged and innovative ways a core educational focus.
  
- ▶ ***Recruit innovative faculty and staff who seek to contribute to the institution's legacy and be part of new intellectual frontiers in teaching and research:*** Opportunities for staff and faculty to create, iterate, and hone their leadership skills are often welcome for young and ambitious faculty and program leaders looking to make a mark.
  
- ▶ ***Attract ongoing funding support from trustees, local business leaders, or alumni who want to further embed these ideas into the institution:*** Leverage the brand value of being a Changemaker Institution by sharing stories of innovators and changemakers in your marketing, admissions outreach, alumni engagement, and donor stewardship to gain vision-aligned funders who will support your work. For example: Babson College received \$10 million from the Lewis Family Foundation to launch the Lewis Institute for Social Innovation; Tulane University received \$15 million from Trustee Phyllis Taylor to launch the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking.

- ▶ ***Establish a regional reputation of impact:*** The University of Northampton partners with local primary and high schools in presenting a K–12 Changemaker Award that recognizes outstanding student-led changemaker initiatives that contribute to improvements within the local community. A core part of Northampton’s focus is a regional influence strategy. By promoting changemaker education at over thirty primary and twenty-five high schools in Northamptonshire County, the University of Northampton is positioned as a thought leader and establishes connections with local schools as a feeder for future prospective students.

Simon Fraser University has three campuses in the three largest cities in British Columbia—Vancouver, Burnaby, and Surrey. As an example of the university’s regional impact, the SFU Surrey campus was built on top of a mall fifteen years ago, immediately integrating SFU into the community, and the campus continues to be a catalyst for the transformation of Surrey into a regional hub of innovation. Additionally, the Burnaby Mountain campus is home to UniverCity, a sustainable community with five thousand residents, and the Vancouver Local Economic Development Lab, on the Vancouver campus, is a multiyear partnership with Downtown Eastside community organizations that builds, tests, and scales solutions for a more inclusive local economy. SFU’s one university / three campus model recognizes that the three cities it serves have different needs and issues. Utilizing the SFU Engagement and SFU Innovates strategies alongside faculty-specific programs, the university works with communities to help address place-based economic, environmental, and social issues.



- ▶ **Signal to employers that your graduates are entrepreneurial and innovative:** As automation is taking over many industries, workers of the future need to offer a comparative advantage. Deep empathy, creativity, problem-solving, collaborative leadership, and the ability to work in complex and global teams are skills necessary to stay relevant. These skills are uniquely honed through change-maker education. As an example, the Canadian network of Changemaker Campuses is working together with Canada's largest employer, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), to re-research the connection between changemaker programming (curricular and co-curricular) and student development of twenty-first-century competencies. This partnership stemmed from RBC's interest in supporting youth to adapt to twenty-first-century workforce needs.

Clearly, there are many benefits to moving your institution towards changemaking. As you continue this work, we encourage you to think about how to lean into your institution's already existing strengths to best leverage these advantages. The long-term impact of providing identities and skillsets to contribute to positive social change will help to cement your institution's reputation as a leader in relevant, high-quality education.



The background of the slide features a low-angle, upward-looking perspective of several classical columns. The columns are rendered in a monochromatic orange color, matching the overall background. The perspective creates a sense of height and grandeur, with the columns converging towards the top of the frame. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

# Strategic Benefits



Recruitment



Increased  
Funding



Regional  
Influence



Employer  
Alignment



Looking  
Forward: We Are  
Part of a Bigger  
Picture



Higher education has played a pivotal role in society throughout our history. Academic institutions have helped enliven our cities, power-up our economies, and develop the ideas that improve our lives every day.

It is for all of these reasons that we believe higher education, of all of the institutions in society, is uniquely positioned to prepare for tomorrow's needs and challenges.

In fact, we believe that higher education can lead society by demonstrating to large companies, K-12 education, and government institutions what the future of an organization needs to look like. By modeling distributed leadership, designing new approaches to learning, aligning resources with community needs, and activating changemakers across an institution, higher education can start a ripple effect across all sectors.

As we've outlined in this brief, we believe social innovation is the framework that will allow your institution to thrive in the twenty-first century. This insight is one we've gained from working with hundreds of campuses over the past decade.

Every institution that we work with helps to refine what a Change-maker Institution looks like. Every leader who wrestles with how to make this vision a reality adds to our institutional change

methodology. And every educator who is willing to experiment with new ways of catalyzing changemakers adds to our knowledge of what a changemaker education can be.

As a higher education leader, we hope you'll take the methodology we've outlined in this brief and adapt it to your institutional culture and the reality of your community. We hope that in that process you improve upon and reinvent everything we've just outlined. And then, we hope you will come back and tell us about it.

Together we can help create a world where Changemaker Institutions are the norm—where every faculty member, every administrator, and every student identifies themselves as a changemaker. Then, and only then, will we be able to move the needle on our most pressing global problems and to build a future where everyone can thrive.

# Next Steps

Though we've written this brief to stand alone, it is also an invitation for your institution to join our learning community.

As a first step, we encourage you to send members of your team who are best positioned as potential Change Leaders to attend our annual conference—the Ashoka U Exchange. At the Exchange they will be exposed to more than 700 individuals who lead changemaker education initiatives on their campus and are actively working on institutional innovation.

For those on your team who are ready to launch new courses, programs, or campus-wide strategies, we recommend our online professional development program—the Ashoka U Commons. The Commons experience takes place over a semester and brings together a cohort of faculty and administrators who are facing a similar challenge. We group participants according to the action plan they are seeking to develop—whether that's designing a social innovation course, developing a degree program, or changing campus culture.

For more resources and information about our programs, please visit [www.AshokaU.org](http://www.AshokaU.org).

The logo features a large, stylized tree silhouette in a light blue color, centered on a solid teal background. The tree has a thick trunk and a wide, spreading canopy. The text "ASHOKA U" is overlaid on the tree. "ASHOKA" is in white, bold, uppercase letters. "U" is in white, bold, uppercase letters, set within an orange square that is slightly tilted to the right.

**ASHOKA U**



# Acknowledgments

We have worked with incredible partners and colleagues who make it a joy to come to work every day. We hope these acknowledgments will come close to conveying the respect, love, and gratitude we have for so many people who have been with us through the entire journey of Ashoka U.

***Strategic Brief Reviewers:*** This document has been strengthened and sharpened in innumerable ways by the eighteen reviewers who have helped with clarity, framing, accuracy, and actionability. There are too many of them to list by name, but they span our Changemaker Campus leaders, senior Ashoka leaders, Ashoka U advisors, and key partners. You have all helped to bring this document to life!

***Changemaker Campus Leaders:*** For the knowledge, insights, and inspiration for this strategic brief, we need to thank the one hundred-plus Change Leaders and presidents, provosts, and trustees from Changemaker Campuses who we have had the honor of working closely with for nearly a decade. You have been in the trenches doing the work and pushing forward new models for higher education with grit, grace, endless strength, and courage. There are too many of you to name, but many of you are dear friends, mentors, cheerleaders, and co-creators of the institutional change and social innovation strategy that drives us. Thank you for never giving up, despite the challenges, and for continuing to advance meaningful positive change within your institution and higher education as a whole.

***Ashoka:*** For the opportunity to be able to launch Ashoka U, we need to thank Bill Drayton, CEO and founder, who has always challenged us to stay focused on our end goal of systemic change in higher education. His ability to predict future trends

and possibilities has provided the North Star of impact for us. Diana Wells, Ashoka's president, has been a powerful champion of the importance that higher education be a key driver to enable an "everyone a changemaker" world. Throughout it all, we have been inspired, challenged, and coached by our team-of-teams of Ashoka colleagues. We have endless respect and gratitude for the entire staff community of Ashoka. All of you are the most passionate, creative, and entrepreneurial individuals we have had the pleasure to work alongside for many years.

***Funding Partners:*** We want to thank key supporters who have made Ashoka U (and this publication) possible. The Moxie Foundation has believed in Ashoka U since we were still a start-up organization and dared us to dream big and unleash a new level of impact. They were the engine that fueled our growth to the global network and organization that we now are. The Einhorn Family Charitable Trust has been a key thought partner in our strategic evolution to a field-building organization, and the rigor, values alignment, and research orientation they model in their own work has been a beacon for us to follow. Finally, the Cordes Foundation has been there since the first year of Ashoka U and continues to push us forward through ongoing strategic advising and coaching.

***Ashoka U Team:*** Last, but not least, we want to thank the entire Ashoka U team. Each of you is bringing to life our vision for change in higher education in incredibly important and valuable ways. You have shown us the true definition of what it means to be a team and have made a lasting impact on us, both personally and professionally. None of this would be possible without you.

Thank you, all!