

How Mental Models Affect Transformative Change

Debra Bragg, Office of Community College Research and
Leadership, University of Illinois

Donna Dare, St. Louis Community College District

Transformative Change

“Raising individual, organizational and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.”

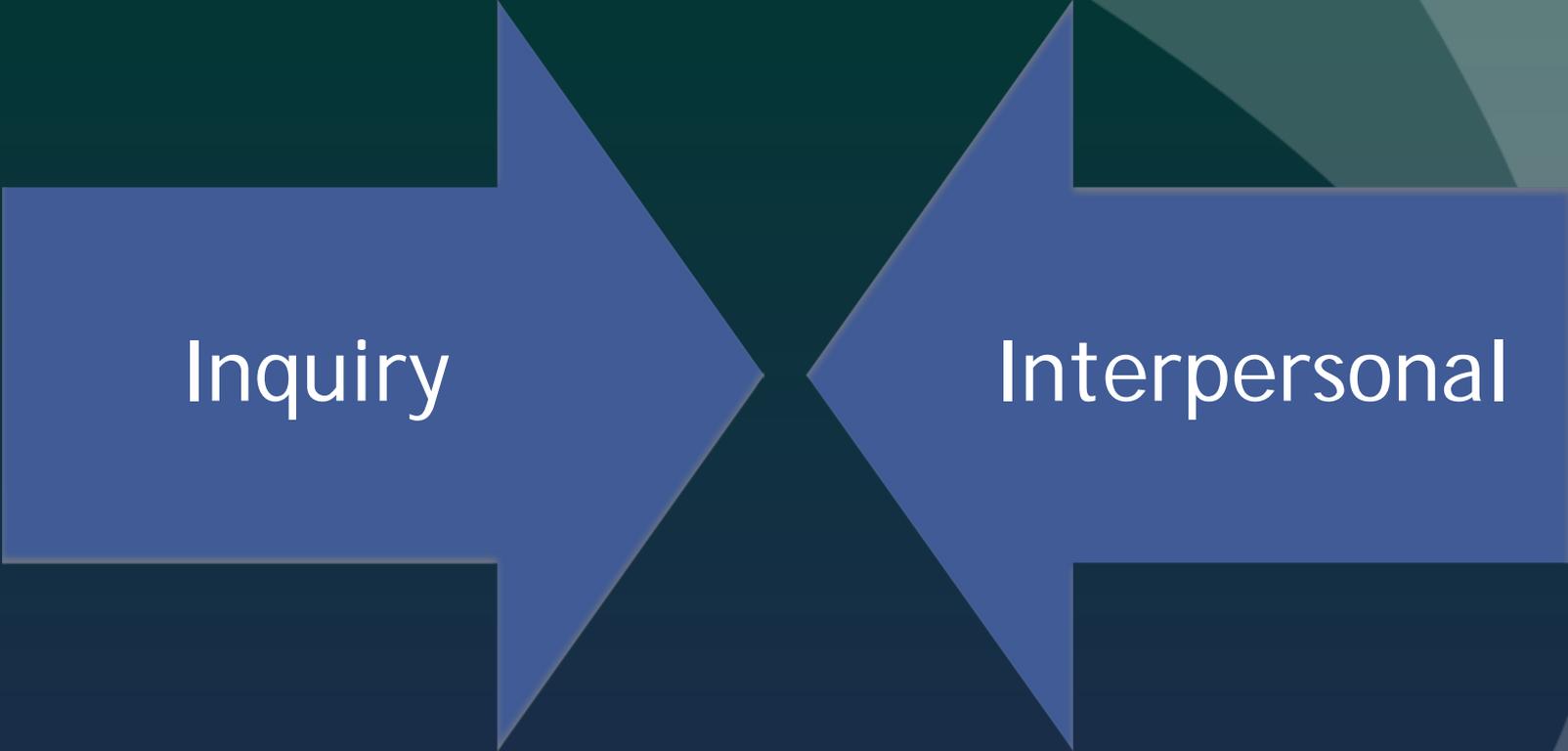
D. Bragg & M. Feldbaum (2013)

Mental Models

- “Deeply held internal images of the way the world works. [These images can empower or] they can limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting” (Senge, 1990, p. 174).

Managing Mental Models

- “Surfacing,
- Testing,
- Improving our internal pictures of how the world works – promises to be a major breakthrough for building learning organizations” (Senge, 1990, p. 174)



Inquiry

Interpersonal

Inquiry

Interpersonal

Transformative
Learning

Guidelines from Senge's *Fifth Discipline* (1990)

- Make your own reasoning explicit
- Encourage others to explore your views
- Encourage others to share their views - "think aloud"
- Investigate views that differ from yours
- State your assumptions clearly, and back them up with data
- Work together to get new information
- Work together to overcome barriers

Mental Models of the Community College

- A Mission-based Mental Model
 - Open Door
 - Focus on teaching and students
 - Combination of transfer and career/technical programming
- A Political or Historical Mental Model
 - Limited funding (relative to 4-years)
 - Legacy of “junior” college model
 - Community-focused

Mental Models of the Community College

- A Structural Mental Model
 - Credit and Non-Credit Programming
 - Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
 - Teaching and/or Learning
 - Classroom Learning and Academic Support Centers

Mental Models of the Community College

- Inquiry: If we present data about the “open door” role of community colleges, how might your response or approach to the problem vary from your own personal perspective as a.....
 - Legislator?
 - Administrator?
 - Student affairs staff member?
 - Faculty member?
 - Parent and graduate of a four-year university?
 - Other?

Mental Models of the Community College

- Interpersonal: How does your mental model influence the way you think about change within the community college? What would it take to change your mental model?
 - Compelling data?
 - Examples of successful institutions?
 - Models of high-impact practices?
 - Administrative support for restructuring?
 - A different funding model?

Mental Models of the Community College

- Transformative Learning: What tenets of your mental model of community colleges MUST remain? What tenets can be modified or sacrificed in order to shift your mental model? What potential change might result with a commitment to inquiry-based, transformative learning? For example:
 - Community colleges MUST remain open door institutions
 - We MUST think differently about alternatives other than adding another level of developmental course work for low-skilled adults

Mental Model & Community College Activity

1. Identify one or two of your “mental models” about the community college works.
2. Share your mental models with others, and find out whether others share your views or hold different views.
3. Identify your assumptions and identify the data you associate with your assumptions.
4. Determine if additional information is needed to validate of your mental models, to expose limitations, and to determine whether your mental models should change.
5. How can you managing mental models help to promote transformative change?

Shared Mental Models

- Shared mental models among team members are associated with effective team performance (e.g., Mathieu et al., 2000, 2005).
- “Team learning, defined as the development, modification and reinforcement of mental models through processes of group interaction (Mohammed & Dumville, 2001)
 - Mutual understanding
 - Mutual agreement

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Contact

- Debra Bragg - Director, Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois
 - E-mail: dbragg@illinois.edu
 - PH: 217-244-8974
 - Website: [Http://occr.l.illinois.edu](http://occr.l.illinois.edu)
- Donna Dare - Vice Chancellor for Academic & Student Affairs, St. Louis Community College
 - E-mail: ddare@stlcc.edu
 - PH: 314-539-5288
 - Website: <http://www.stlcc.edu>