



*Leaders, Innovators, Change Agents: Continuing Higher Education's  
Role in Improving Access and Success*

# ***Cultivating a Campus Culture for the Successful Adoption of Competency Based Education***

A stylized city skyline graphic at the bottom of the slide, composed of various colored silhouettes of buildings in shades of pink, orange, yellow, teal, and blue.

Charleston, SC  
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# Presenters



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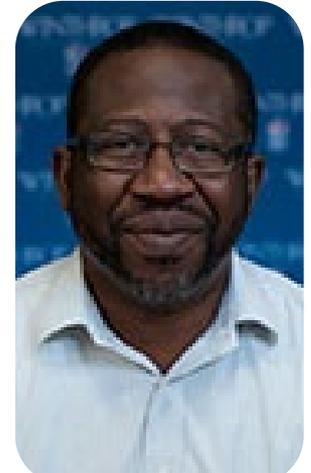
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# Agenda

01

## **Background on Winthrop University and our CBE Initiative**

Winthrop's journey into CBE education

02

## **Cultivating Change**

Kotter's 8 step model for change

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## **Small Group Discussion**

Apply the model to your own institution, organization or department

04

## **Sharing**

Group reports and take-aways

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## **Wrap Up**

Recommendations and next steps to build on change models



### Winthrop University Profile:

- Founded in 1886
- Located in Rock Hill, South Carolina, 20 minutes from Charlotte, NC
- **3800+** undergraduate and **900+** graduate students
- 4 Colleges + 1 School: 1) Arts and Sciences 2) Business & Technology 3) Education Sport and Human Sciences 4) Visual and Performing Arts
- **School of Graduate, Online and Extended Education**
- Beautiful campus encompasses a rich architectural blend of neo-Georgian buildings and is included in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Diverse student body: **60%** female, **46%** ethnic minority, **30%** first gen
- US News ranked **#5** in Southern Regional Universities, **#5** for Veterans and, **#13** for Social Mobility

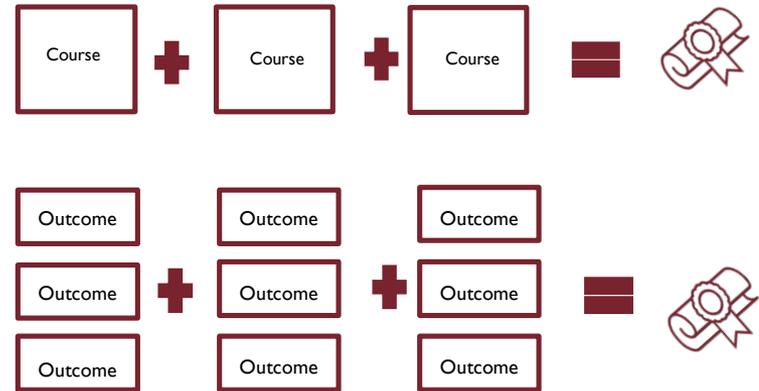
# Background on CBE Initiative at Winthrop University

- ❖ Declining enrollments: from N = 6,130 (2013) to N = 4,897 (2022)
- ❖ Increasing focus on adult and professional learners
- ❖ **Piloted BPS Program** (launched in 2020) with the aim of extending educational options for adult learners
- ❖ New President after 3 years of interim leadership
  - Non-traditional
  - Observed success of CBE at University of Maine at Presque Isle
  - CBE as Catalyst for Institutional Change and to meet needs of both AL and employers in York County, Upper Midlands Region, and state of SC as a whole
  - Access to higher education by underrepresented and underserved learners
  - Workforce development in support of the [SC Ascend 60X30](#)



# What is Competency-Based Education?

- A model for higher education, ideal for **adult and professional students** returning to college
- Focus on learner **mastery** of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviors (competencies)
- **Competencies** stack into micro-credentials, certificates, degrees
- **Credit for prior learning (PLA)**
- **Time is variable**, learning is fixed
- **Flexible, pre-planned, backwards designed** curricular journey
- Performance-based, criterion-referenced and **authentic assessments**
- **Personalized approach** to wrap-around supports



*Competency-based education is a method of academic instruction and evaluation based upon students demonstrating mastery of a subject via performance on relevant, high fidelity, real-world assessments. De-emphasizes time in seat for demonstration of proficiency.*

# Factors Affecting the Success of Change

## Individual Resistance



## Organizational Resistance

The diagram shows a box containing a list of organizational resistance factors. A large orange arrow on the left points right towards the box. The factors listed are: Structural inertia, Limited focus of change, Group inertia, Threat to expertise, Disrupt cultural traditions or relationships, and Threat to power.

- Structural inertia
- Limited focus of change
- Group inertia
- Threat to expertise
- Disrupt cultural traditions or relationships
- Threat to power

INTERNAL

## Strengths

- Strong teaching faculty
- Focus on excellence in curricula design and delivery
- Strong desire to reach underrepresented students
- CBE is Winthrop Mission aligned

## Weaknesses

- Structural inertia
- Hierarchical culture, slow to adapt
- Low faculty morale following COVID
- turnover of leadership
- Too exhausted for the heavy lift
- Under resourced in key areas
- Concerns about institutional identity
- Concerns about individual identity
- Lack of efficacy with new delivery model

## Opportunities

- Labor market shortage has employers scrambling to find qualified employees
- Appetite to upskill and retool their current workforce if they cannot hire new folks
- Employers prefer competency based language (KSABAs)
- Would be first to market CBE in SC

## Threats

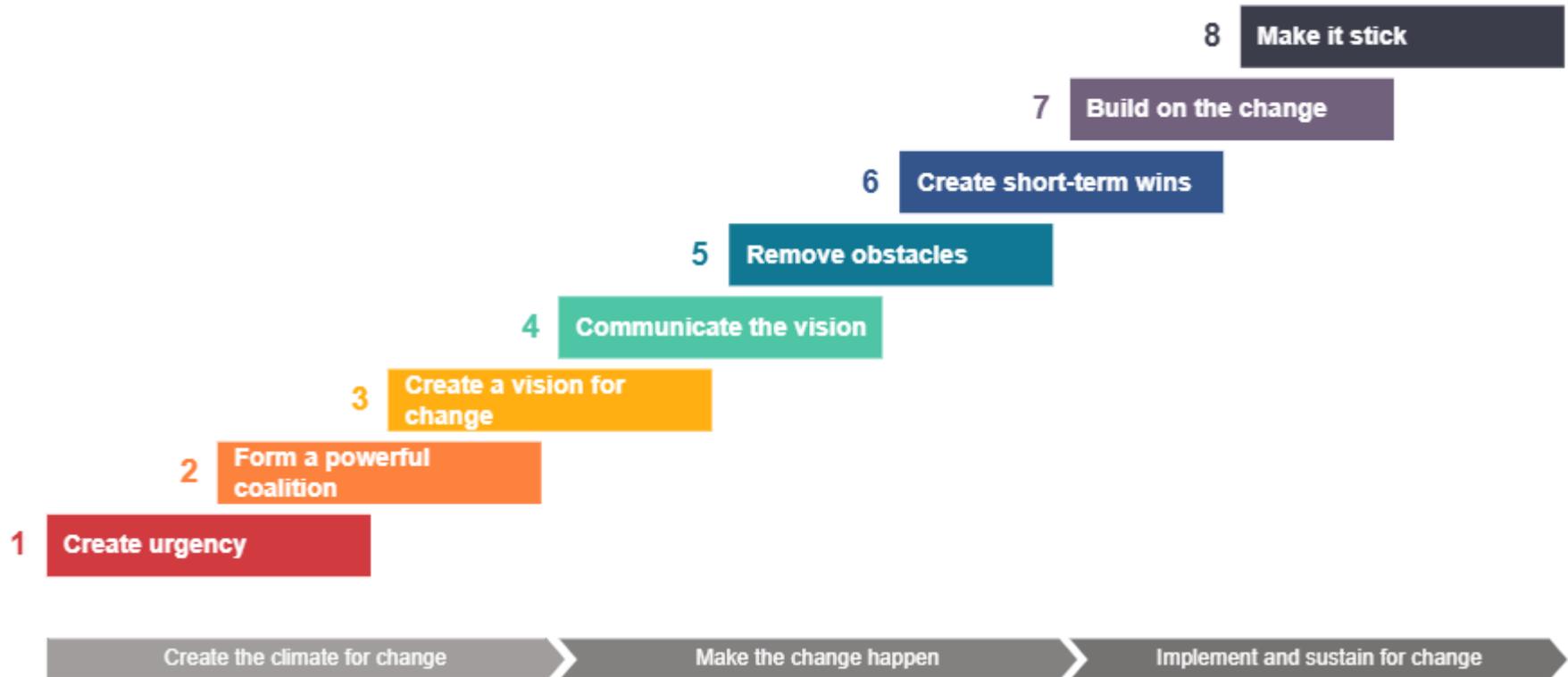
- Changing pace of industry
- Competition from MOOCs
- Less expensive to outsource
- First adopter risks, student appetite unknown
- Lack of familiarity
- Online learning fatigue

EXTERNAL

POSITIVE

NEGATIVE

# John Kotter's Model for Leading Change



# Create a Sense of Urgency

*“Inspire people to act – with passion and purpose – to achieve a bold, aspirational opportunity. Build momentum that excites people to pursue a compelling (and clear) vision of the future... together.”*

## What we did:

- **Acknowledged our current financial and enrollment realities**
- **Avoid “doom and gloom”** language
- Used **positive language** to create a sense of excitement and quell fear
- **Emphasized opportunity** to be first to market
- Grounded the initiative in our **mission**

**How would you create a sense of urgency?**

## WHY NOW, WHY WINTHROP?

- **Shrinking pool of 18-22 year old consumers** (EAB, 2022)
- **Increasing SC funding and attention on adult degree completion** (*Ascend 60X30*)
- **Sizable potential market seeking degree completion in York (53k) and surrounding region (96k), and in SC (450k)** (2018 Census)
- **Ever-growing demand for increased access, affordability and flexibility**
- **Labor market shortages lead employers toward upskilling and retooling workforce**
- **It's mission-centric**
- **Winthrop would be first in SC to develop major CBE**
- **We are poised to do this well**
  - National caliber, student-focused faculty
  - Emphasis on high touch, transformative experiences
  - Prior experience developing major online delivery
- **Strong institutional support**

# Form a Powerful Guiding Coalition

*“a coalition of committed people – born of all ranks – to guide it, coordinate it, and communicate its activities.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we did:

- ***Tapped respected faculty and staff*** representatives from each college to consult on culture change
- Created a ***steering committee*** to include representatives from faculty, staff and administrative officers
- Created an ***implementation committee*** to include officers and staff from all campus service offices

**Who would you tap for your guiding coalition?**

# Coalition Building

Resources, talent, and structures across the university working together on steering and implementation committees



# Create a Vision for Change

*“Clarify how the future will be different from the past and get buy-in for how you can make that future a reality through initiatives linked directly to the vision.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we did:

- **Reflected** on our history, legacy cultural influences and potential barriers to change for both faculty and staff
- **Crafted our internal and external narrative** by developing **our CBE story**, including **mantras**, language and jargon
  - “CBE as game changer,” a way to “level up”
- **Top Leadership sets the vision early and often** through direct communications with campus

**How would you create a vision for change?**

# Enlist a Volunteer Army & Communicate the Vision

*“Large-scale change can only occur when massive numbers of people rally around a common opportunity. At an individual level, they must want to actively contribute. Collectively, they must be unified in the pursuit of achieving the goal together.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we did:

- Culture committee begins “***campus road show***”
- ***Launch an internal website*** with include FAQs, student stories, and a means for submitting questions
- ***Make CBE part of the University Strategic Plan***
- ***Promote ownership*** through participative input
- ***Establish a plan for routine updates*** to faculty and staff
- ***Create formal mechanisms for upward feedback***
- ***Create a visual timelines*** for anticipated rollout

**How would you communicate the Vision?**

## PURPOSE OF COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION

To convey a learner's **capabilities** more clearly and explicitly to employers, while empowering students to engage in a more **personalized learning** experience, at an **affordable price point**, with the **flexibility of time**, which allows them to integrate it with their work and family.





# Group Breakouts



# Group Discussion: Steps 1-4

## I. Create a Sense of Urgency

How could you create a sense of urgency while avoiding immobilizing “doom and gloom” positioning?



## III. Create a Vision

How have you created a vision for change?



## II. Form a Powerful Coalition

Who would you tap for a guiding coalition? What considerations are there for who needs to be at the table?



## IV. Communicate the Vision

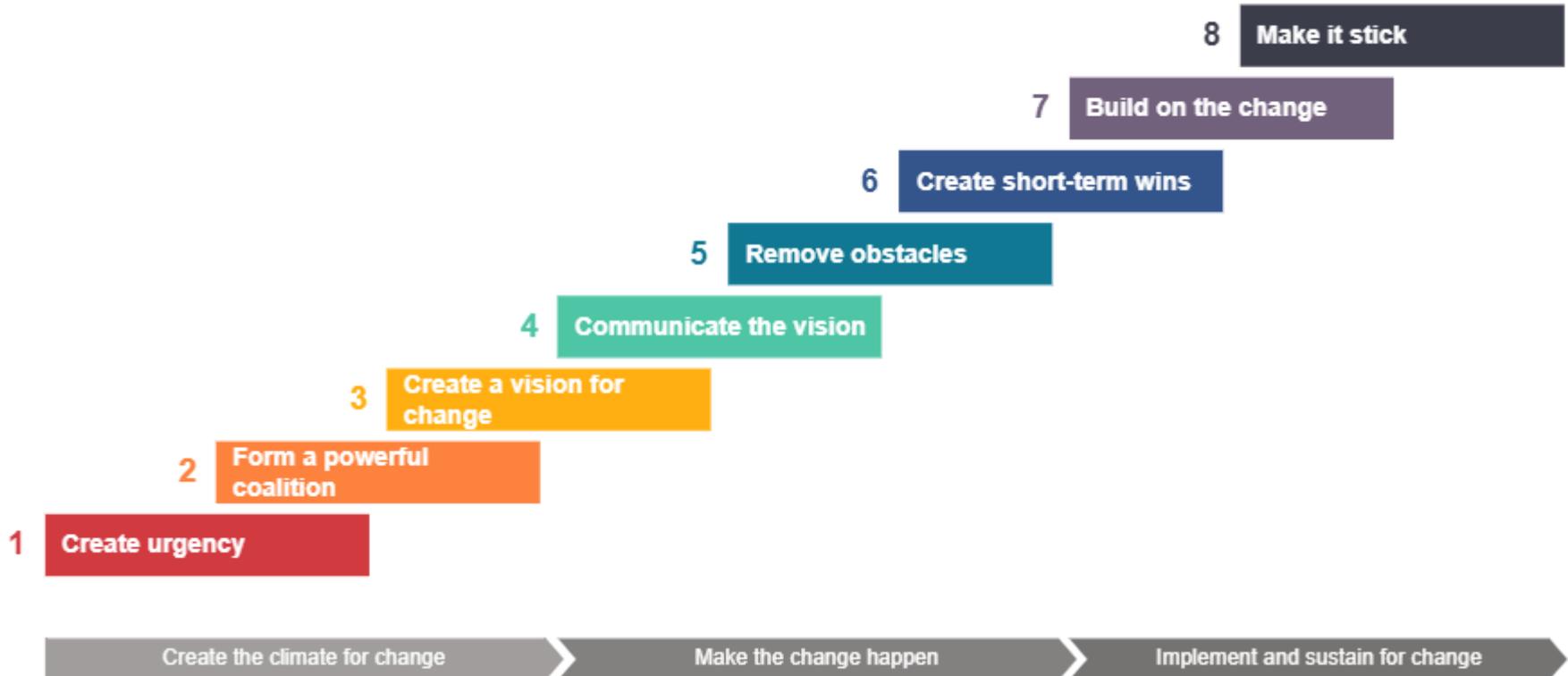
How do you communicate your vision?



**Breakout  
Discussions**



# John Kotter's Model for Leading Change



# Enable Action by Removing Barriers

*”Remove the obstacles that slow things down or create roadblocks to progress. Clear the way for people to innovate, work more nimbly across silos, and generate impact quickly.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we are doing

- **Identify University policies** which serve as **facilitators or barriers** to employee adoption of CBE (e.g. faculty ownership of intellectual property, pay policies, course load definitions, etc.)
- Connect faculty and staff with **external assets** and examples of success from *other universities*
- Assemble and collate **stand-alone resources** (articles, videos) with the help of librarians
- Establish **formal training** of faculty and staff
- Create a **Big Rollout Event** (e.g. our experience with CBEN visit)

**What barriers must be removed?**

# Create Short-term Wins

*”Wins are the molecules of results. They must be recognized, collected, and communicated – early and often – to track progress and energize volunteers to persist.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we are doing:

- **Announce acquisition of vendors**, support and other resources to **improve morale**
- **Share and replicate early successes** with each stage of design and development on campus
- **Faculty Show and Tell** after 1<sup>st</sup> program rollout

**How can you create and celebrate short term wins?**

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREP PROGRAM



Community Partners



Time and Flexibility



Gather Team



Professional Development



Identify Standards &  
Develop Competencies



Develop Template



Collaboration



Develop Content

# Build on the Change to Sustain Acceleration

*“Press harder after the first successes. Your increasing credibility can improve systems, structures and policies. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality.”*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we have planned:

- ***Gather and disseminate lessons learned*** from pilot program leaders

### **Individual & Group Incentives**

- ***Create a Fair Pay/Compensation model*** for development of competency based courses (for single and multi-person collaborations within and across disciplines.)
- ***Create College level incentives/kickbacks*** for participation
- ***Establish a student and employee referral program***

### **Build Recognition Programs**

- ***Publicly recognize faculty, chairs and Deans and staff*** who lead, participate in or champion CBE
- ***Newsletter “CBE Corner,” Presidential updates, Dean updates***
- ***Establish Presidential Award of Excellence*** for CBE Leadership

**What can be done to sustain acceleration for change?**

# Make it Stick by Instituting the Change

*Articulate the connections between new behaviors and organizational success... until they become strong enough to replace old habits. Evaluate systems and processes to ensure management practices reinforce the new behaviors, mindsets, and ways of working you invested in.*

<https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

## What we have planned:

### Establish Accountability

- Establish **performance metrics**
- Link CBE strategic objectives to **employee performance objectives**

### Encourage and Incentivize research on CBE

- Set aside **internal research grants** for research on CBE
- Plan an **on-campus conference** on CBE 2-3 years out, to incentivize research and engagement, and to share and disseminate learning.
- **Send faculty and staff to CBE conferences** (CBEN or otherwise) to learn more

**How do systems support/reward or undermine/punish those who engage in the change?**



# Group Breakouts



# Group Discussion: Steps 4-8

## V. Remove Obstacles

What obstacles exist and how can you clear the path to success?



## VII. Build on Success to Accelerate Change

How can you capitalize on the momentum from early wins?



## VI. Create short term wins

How do you create small wins?



## VIII. Make it stick

How will you institutionalize the change?



**Breakout  
Discussions**



# Thank you

## *Cultivating a Campus Culture for the Successful Adoption of Competency Based Education*

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