Summary of Advice from Previous Change Teams

What are some general things you would encourage all Change Teams to do?

Choice of Project/Defining the Project
  - Start with non-controversial project
  - Pick a project that is critical to the department, given team members’ busy schedules
  - Be realistic about what a Change Team can accomplish in one year

Realize and plan for the fact that your project will take time
  - Identify clear goals and objectives; develop a focused and well-defined project
  - Set a realistic goal
  - Pick a project that people can benefit from concretely

Issues of Timing
  - Think strategically about the appropriate time to implement your project
  - Set a timeline and share it with the Chair
  - Keep in regular contact, both in formal and informal settings
  - Set deadlines for project tasks

Issues of Support/Resources outside the Team
  - Survey the department and get a sense of the department’s priorities
  - Think realistically about what resources are available to your team.

Utilize staff support when available
  - Solicit feedback from department members on a regular basis (if they feel their opinions are valued, they are more likely to get on board)
  - Secure buy-in from department leadership, faculty, and other relevant constituencies
  - Frame project/issues strategically – in ways that make it easier for critical actors to be supportive
  - Important to have a critical mass of faculty on board
  - Take advantage of advice
  - Find out whether or not another Change Team or department at your home institution has tackled a similar project; if so, learn from their experiences

Dealing with Resistance
  - It’s important to infiltrate the opposition and learn more about their point of view
  - Identify likely opponents; also identify allies
Issues of Team Process

Composition of the Change Team is important. Find team members who are enthusiastic about participating, have time to participate, and will contribute to the effort as equal partners. Change Team members should be problem-solvers
Should have a team member who is viewed as non-threatening to the entire department
Ideally, the faculty on the Change Team should represent a cross-section of key department divisions/“interests”/ranks
Change Teams need at least 3 members

Keep in mind change members’ strengths/skill sets when delegating responsibilities
Celebrate small milestones with team members
Focus on “root cause”
Do some work “under the radar”
It’s important to recognize successes and not just focus on failures
Take “baby steps” when implementing your project
When trying to affect change, Change Teams should be willing to work gradually and on an individual level within their departments
In some cases, it might be appropriate for a department’s Change Team to serve in an advisory capacity to standing committees to assist with change efforts
Understand there may be a personal cost for team members working on these issues (e.g., focusing on difficulties among faculty members or how you may be contributing to the problem)
Upload information about the Change Team’s proposal to shared server location. This way all faculty have access to the pertinent information and are able to start or contribute to an on-line discussion (an opportunity for “shared conversations” and a way to distribute information to faculty without discussing the change effort in meetings that would likely be dominated by faculty opposed to change). This also makes the change process more transparent.

Take a Long View

The Change Team is planting seeds of change
Teams should think about long term change as well