

Executive Summary To President Yao

President's Operational Effectiveness Collaborative

By Academic Lead, Dr. Tiina Itkonen
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Frameworks and Method:

Framework

Bolman & Deal (2013, 2017) outline four distinct lenses with which to examine organizations:

- structural components (e.g., top down, bottom up, lateral linkages within and across units);
- psychology of organizations, "human resource" lens (e.g., motivation, training and expertise, teamwork);
- political lens (e.g., scarce resources); and
- cultural lens (the purpose and meaning of the organization, history, celebrations, and traditions; what the organization states and artifacts indicate it values versus what happens in reality).

Method

I analyzed the work of the teams submitted to me in the modules and/or via email or meetings, and my own observations throughout the various phases of POEC, using a detailed four-frame coding scheme (Itkonen, 2019; Itkonen, in press).

This executive summary is from a longer report submitted to President Yao, dated 2/2024.

The aim was to summarize the work of the inaugural President's Operational Effectiveness Collaborative (POEC) conducted to date, including the teams' preliminary findings which they will submit in their own reports. The second aim was to provide my observations as the Academic Lead in this space (refer to the left column on frameworks and method). More systematic interviews will be conducted to supplement these organizational observations.

Finding 1: Limited Awareness of the Campus Ecosystem as a Whole

The awareness of the campus macro-organizational structure is limited in how the work in one unit is interconnected to other units/divisions.

- Mintzberg model was a new concept to all teams.
- Model is one way to depict how various divisions fit together toward delivering the core function of an organization.

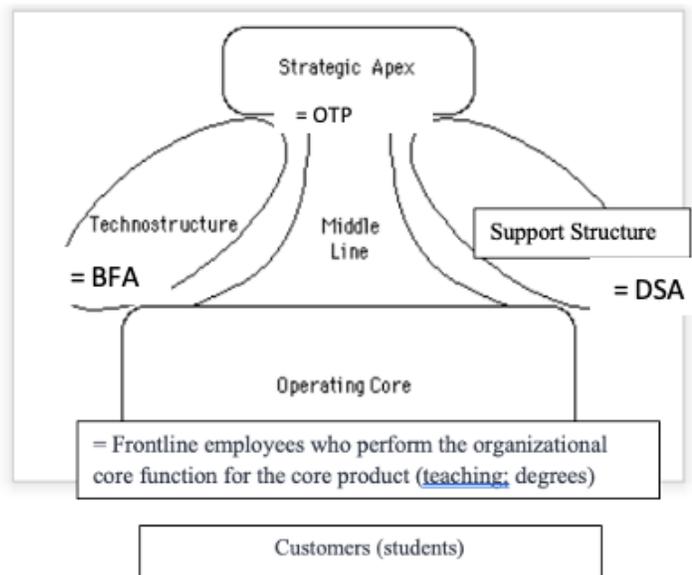


Figure 1. Mintzberg model of organizations.

From *Inside Our Strange World of Organizations* (1989). The Free Press.

Recommendations:

- Campus is addressing the shared vision through One Health initiative
- Institute a cross-divisional “Analyst Collaborative” inclusive of all divisions to share information, cross-train, collaborate, motivate.
- Would most likely connect to *Climate Survey* and CLCs.
- Implement the teams’ short-term recommendations which can be implemented with existing resources but may require cross-unit collaboration.
- Engage with teams beyond the inaugural year POEC whose issues require **broader commitments across campus, both short-term and long-term**, to fine tune and develop the plans further.

Finding 2: A Shared Direction

- The lack of a shared vision was particularly central in the recruitment team’s findings, as it impacted the ability to talk to schools and community members about the vision and a unified “story” of CI.
- The **lack of a shared vision** creates confusion among the employees and community, the team found. Moreover, it is difficult to “market” something if there is no succinct pitch to communicate a shared identity and purpose, or if it varies across people, events, and contexts.
- One Health initiative addresses this issue; aggregated finding #2 simply reinforces the need for a **shared vision and direction** as a finding under the cultural frame.

Finding 3: Weak Linkages and System Gaps

- A consistent theme across **all** POEC proposals and the POEC teams’ case study findings pointed to a **lack of intentional linkages across and within** divisions and units because of weak collaboration, workflow and information sharing structures.
- “*Human resource frame*”—*the people you know (or don’t know) -- overrides the structural frame.*
- Work is often completed in isolation or replicated (finding in many teams’ case studies).
- Resources are duplicated because work is duplicated (several team findings).
- Knowledge and expertise in one unit is not capitalized by sharing it, expect “ad hoc” through informal networks.
- Sense of isolation among some job roles.

Summary Findings 2 and 3*Identified need for a shared vision*

Team recommendations for structural ways to “connect the dots” across divisions and units to build missing linkages to increase workflow, collaboration, information sharing

Other recommendations:

- *cross-training (“human resource”/psychology frame),*
- *ways to combat isolation for a sense of belonging (HR/cultural),*
- *the need for cultural shifts in how to frame the issues*
- *long-term planning where the issue(s) require broader commitments*

Recommendations:

- Identify spaces where innovation will be encouraged. Example: Could the university hour be used for in-person ideation sessions...?
- The POEC poster session for the campus community will further feature and hopefully inspire cross-unit collaboration

Finding 4: Innovation and Creativity

- A handful of POEC proposals pointed to an overall finding that when someone has ideas, they have nowhere to go; instead, they end up in the email universe. (The OTP took these proposals and has since intervened).
- Some cross-unit teams had enrolled in POEC with a fairly clearly articulated project in mind. Question then follows, why did they need the POEC initiative –a “permission”-- to embark on that work?
- These items point to a cultural frame finding of a weak innovation culture in which ideas are welcomed, collaboration and creative explorations of solutions encouraged.

Finding 5: Challenges and Benefits

POEC Challenges

- The POEC initiative is not for everyone and not for every issue. Teams who have a structural issue should take advantage of the Lean Sigma expertise on campus.
- POEC includes a *professional development component*. **Time** required to engage in the learning and the team processes is a major resource issue.
- Several teams have expressed doubts whether their POEC analyses and recommendations will lead to action since they may require high level decisions and resources, leaving POEC as a symbolic activity.
- There appear to have been a perception that a “permission/blessing” is needed to initiate change-work across units and divisions.

POEC Benefits

- *Multi-frame analyses and findings:* Solutions must match the problems. Complex problems have multiple dimensions; therefore, the solutions often consist of activities across multiple frames. From a team member:
 - “Everyone on campus should receive this four-frame professional development in some form or other, because it helps lift the focus from the immediate, ‘the self,’ to the larger [context], and consider solutions from a multi-prong approach.”
- Cross-divisional collaboration
- Emerging culture of collaboration—a team even proposed to change the “C” in POEC to refer to “collaborative.” Collaboration has been named as the “one of the most energizing” elements of POEC
- Political voice of employees to participate in analyses and solution generation

Summary: Preliminary POEC Recommendations across Frames

Structural Frame

1. Continue to strengthen lateral linkages for intentional collaboration to “de-silo” campus work as recommended by teams and in this report
2. Engage with the teams beyond this POEC timeframe to develop recommendations further when they require involving other units and/or broader campus commitments
3. Encourage units across campus to utilize the Lean Sigma consultation for streamlining workflow
4. Continue to require that POEC teams consist of and include cross-unit members to reinforce the interconnectedness of complex issues
5. *Long-term*: explore what structural adjustments or overhauls will de-silo units and build natural cross-division and cross-unit collaboration into the regular workflow
6. *Long term*: Consider also technological solutions to foster cross-divisional communication and/or to streamline the platforms
7. *Long term*: Consider how to leverage AI to diminish the need for manual processes which overload staff, which in turn is often expressed as “we need more people [to do/divide the same work].” Instead, we should ask what parts of various workflows could be automated so that the human capital is used for what it is intended--the brain power

Human Resource/Psychology Frame

1. Analyst collaborative: To share information, cross-train, problem solve
2. Utilize the inaugural POEC teams in future POEC cohorts for training and sharing. (This falls also under structural, political and cultural frames!)

Political Frame

1. Explore ways to continue to allocate resources for innovations through POEC (i.e., time, funds for teams’ Islands Café meals which teams have greatly appreciated)
2. Explore other mechanisms to allocate resources (broadly defined) for innovative approaches to solving issues cross-divisionally and across units
3. Explore the recommendations provided by the team on disability accommodations for events to avoid long-term costs
4. It might need to be a campus “directive” (political frame item of leveraging authority) at some point that cross-divisional and cross-unit *collaboration is an expectation moving forward*

Cultural Frame

1. Continue the work conducted in One Health toward a shared purpose and direction (“vision”)
2. A sense of belonging and collaboration culture would be addressed by structural solutions such as time and space for the Analyst Collaborative
3. From the recruitment team’s work, POEC February meeting discussions, and other work on campus, expand the display of CI symbols to all employees and community. *Make CI visible*
4. Continue to *name* innovation explicitly, and speak about a culture of innovation across all campus work, to inspire employees at all levels

In closing, the following is an old poem from the late 80's but appropriate as a conclusion.

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

-Author Unknown-

Respectfully Submitted,

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