Rising from the Ashes

How One Admissions Team Reimagined and Rebuilt in the Aftermath of the Pandemic and Great Resignation

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Hello. Thank you for joining us today!

Fareine Suarez

Assistant Vice President

Markie Rhodes

Director of Admission

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Meet and Greet

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Who is in the room?

- Enrollment Managers
- Admissions
- Marketing
- Student Success
- Ed Tech
- Other

Agenda

- Reflecting on the last 5 years
  - Changes
  - Challenges
- Lessons learned
  - Lessons learned at Illinois Tech
  - Discussion
- Where we are now
- Q&A

The Makings of Today's Message

- Reflecting on our own experiences in recent years
  - Where we started
  - Steps taken
  - Where we are now
  - Future direction

- Team culture survey
  - Allowing staff voices to guide our message

- Change management best practices

Our Intentions

- Provide a safe space
- Reflect, share, and discuss
- Allow minds to meet
- Learn from one another
- Support each other

We rise by lifting others.

Robert G. Ingersoll

Let's Reflect

Institutions have seen a tremendous amount of change in the last few years.

How have the events of the last few years changed your organization?

What challenges have you faced?

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3,000
undergraduate students

16
months fully remote

11
resignations in one year
(including 1 AVP, 1 director,
4 associate directors)

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The Last Five Years

Aug 2018	Largest first-time freshmen class in Illinois Tech history!

Jul 2022	New VP of Enrollment Management + new largest first-time freshmen class!

Mar 2020	Pandemic lockdown

2023 We are here!	Investing in our team

Aug 2021	New university president inaugurated

2025	Fully realize our identity as the premier technology-focused university in Chicago and one of the five premier technology-focused universities in the nation

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Lessons Learned

01 Attitude is contagious

02 Change management matters

03 Ask questions and plant seeds early and often

04 Nurture your staff

05 Be intentional

Lessons Learned

Attitude is Contagious

Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.

Zig Zigler, American Author

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Let's Reflect

"Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude."

How does this quote resonate with your experiences managing a team and creating culture?

Fostering a Positive Atmosphere

"What do you like most about working for Illinois Tech?

For Undergraduate Admissions?"

- People
- Support and Collaboration
- Autonomy
- Ownership
- Flexibility
- Authenticity

- Leading from within
- Accessibility
- Empathy
- Exploration of passions
- Balance
- Mission and sense of impact

Lessons Learned

Change Management Matters

"

There have been times we have received unexpected news about position expectations that have affected my morale. Dealing with the unknown and changeable aspects of this job is something I am still working with and would love to continue working on as a team."

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Let's Discuss

- What are your experiences with change management?

- What practices negatively impacted morale?

- What strategies have impacted your team for the better?
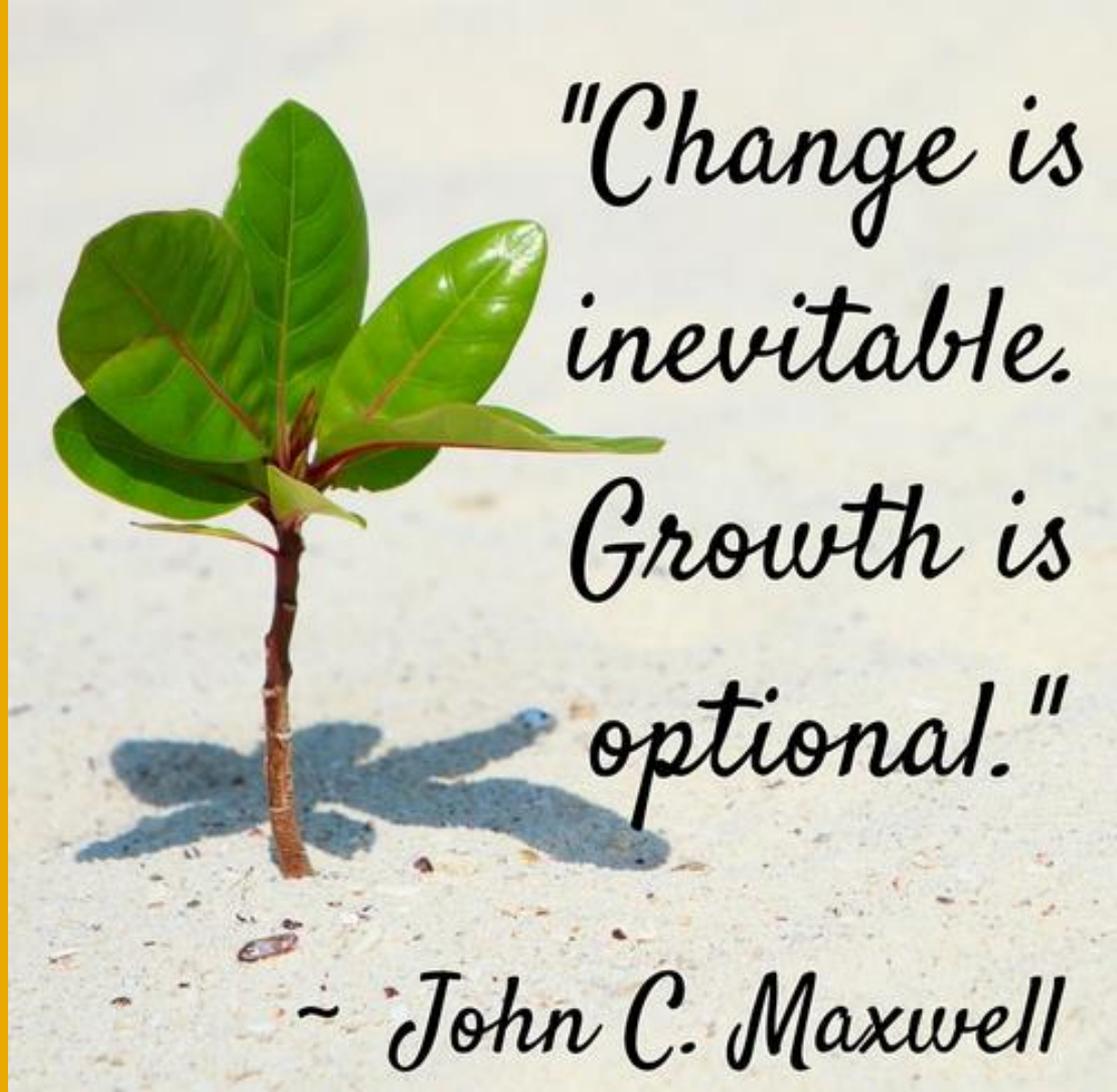
"Change is inevitable. Growth is optional."

~ John C. Maxwell

Change Management Process

Prepare the organization for change

Before delving into logistics, cultural preparation must first take place to achieve the best business outcome

Craft a vision and plan for change

Once the organization is ready to embrace change, leaders must develop a thorough and realistic plan for bringing it about

STRATEGIC GOALS
What goals does this change help the organization work toward?

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
How will success be measured? What metrics need to be moved? What's the baseline for how things currently stand?

PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS AND TEAM
Who will oversee the task of implementing change? Who needs to sign off at each critical stage? Who will be responsible for implementation?

PROJECT SCOPE
What discrete steps and actions will the project include? What falls outside of the project scope?

https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/change-management-process

Change Management Process

Implement the changes

Empower your team to take the necessary steps to achieve the goals of the initiative and celebrate any short-term wins

Embed changes within your team's culture and practices

By embedding changes within the company's culture and practices, it becomes more difficult for backsliding to occur

Review progress and analyze results

Were project goals met? If yes, can this success be replicated elsewhere? If not, what went wrong?

https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/change-management-process

Lessons Learned

Ask Questions and Plant Seeds Early and Often

Let's Discuss

• What types of open-ended questions have you found to be especially impactful?

• How do you make space for these kinds of meaningful discussions?

• What do you do with the answers?

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Build trust with your team

Open-ended questions promote confidence and trust in the relationship. Your direct report receives an implicit message that his or her thoughts are valued and respected.

Learn about your team's level of motivation and adaptability

Open-ended questions help to gather essential information from direct reports about the challenges and opportunities they face.

Prime your team for change

Open-ended questions about institutional challenges help gather insights from your team and primes them to begin thinking about long-term strategy.

hbr.org/2015/09/asking-open-ended-questions-helps-new-managers-build-trust

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Lessons Learned

Nurture Your Staff

Let's Share

How do you intentionally nurture your staff?

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Nurture Your Staff

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What best describes your goals and priorities?

- Department-wide and team retreats

- Fireside chats

- Cheer events

- Peer training and professional development

- Intentional, flexible work schedules

Making a difference in the world
23.8%

Learning new skills
28.6%

Flexible workspace
14.3%

Building a career in higher ed
19.1%

Maintaining work/life balance
14.3%

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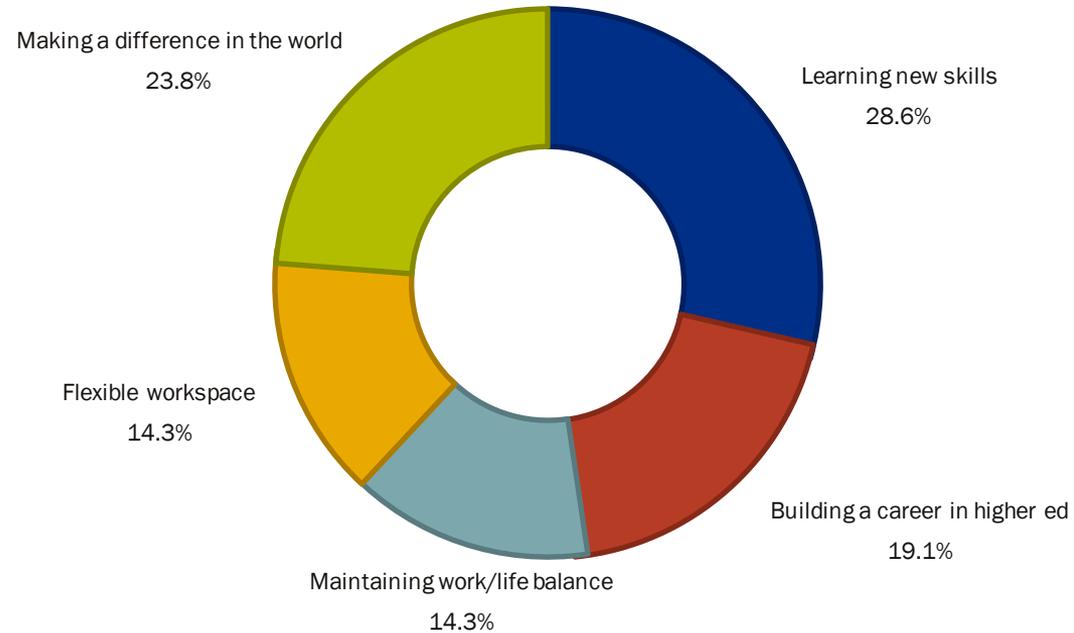
"I feel connected through the meaningful interactions we share, the transparency and access new staff have to the leadership team, and the self-reflection we engage in as a team regularly through check-ins and 1:1 meetings."

Lessons Learned

Be Intentional

Be Intentional

01 Create intentional spaces and schedules

02 Be smart about meetings

03 Clearly communicate expectations

04 Minimize surprises

Let's Reflect

In a fast-paced environment with changing priorities, making space for intentionality can be difficult.

How have you made space for intentionality?

Where are we now?

How it Started and How it's Going

Where are we now?

Fully staffed, cross-functional team — 24 total undergraduate admission team members plus cross-functional work with all of enrollment management

Progress to goals — 11% increase in applications year-to-date

Investment in people — Promotion of three team members, pathways to growth

Global growth — Addition of overseas team in Asia Pacific

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Questions?

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Thank You

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