

SESSION 1 | Navigating Change and Uncertainty

"When you're at the edge of a cliff, sometimes progress is a step backwards."

Prompts for Session Leaders or Discussion/Reflection

1. How are shifting federal and institutional policies around inclusion and belonging landing on your campus? How are you communicating uncertainty to faculty, staff, and students?
2. What does it look like to lead with both institutional compliance and genuine care for belonging — especially when those appear to be in tension?
3. When the ground is shifting beneath you, how do you model steadiness for your team without projecting false certainty?

Small Group Prompt

1. The Edge of the Cliff: Identify one area of significant change or uncertainty currently facing your unit — policy, enrollment, personnel, or culture. Using the quote as a lens, discuss: What would "a step backwards" actually look like here, and could it represent progress? What would you need to feel confident taking that step?
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SESSION 2 | Principles of Fiscal Management

"The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is the way in which we use them."

Prompts for Session Leaders or Discussion/Reflection

1. Review three primary budget models used in higher education. Of the models, which model most closely reflects your current institution? What do you see as its greatest strength and its greatest vulnerability?
2. Provide an example of when a budget constraint forced you to make a difficult decision. Looking back, did that constraint ultimately become a stumbling block or a stepping stone — and what made the difference?
3. How do arts programs make the case for their fiscal value within a larger institutional budget conversation? What language or data have you found most persuasive?

Small Group Prompt

1. Advocacy Role Play: Your arts program has been asked to justify its budget to a provost who views it as a cost center. Develop a 3-minute talking point strategy that reframes the conversation using fiscal principles, not just artistic value.
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SESSION 3 | Strategic Enrollment Management

"In one of our concert grand pianos, 243 taut strings exert a pull of 40,000 pounds on an iron frame. It is proof that out of great tension may come great harmony." — Theodore E. Steinway

Prompts for Session Leaders or Discussion/Reflection

1. How do recruitment and retention strategies differ in arts programs compared to other academic disciplines? What unique challenges and advantages do we have?
2. How does curriculum development factor into your enrollment strategy? Have you made programmatic changes in direct response to enrollment trends?

Small Group Prompt

1. Recruitment to Retention Pipeline: Map the student journey from first inquiry to graduation at your institution. Where are the drop-off points? What interventions — curricular or co-curricular — have worked to keep students engaged and enrolled?
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SESSION 4 | The Value of Mentoring — Lunch Discussion

"In situations that are clear and familiar, the decisions are easier — leadership is easier."

Prompts for Session Leaders or Discussion/Reflection

1. Who has been your most influential mentor, and what specific quality of theirs do you most want to carry forward in your own leadership?
 2. As you step into or grow within a deanship, what is the mentoring relationship you most need right now — a coach, a sponsor, a thought partner, or something else?
 3. How are you actively mentoring others? Is there someone in your faculty or staff who needs more intentional investment from you?
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SESSION 5 | Conflict Resolution and Personnel Management

"Well managed, cooperative conflict contributes to the productivity and innovativeness of a team and the competence and well-being of people."

Prompts for Session Leaders or Discussion/Reflection

1. The quote distinguishes "well managed, cooperative conflict" from conflict that is damaging. What is the difference, and how do you cultivate the former?
2. How do you build trust with faculty and staff before conflict arises, so that when it does, there is a foundation to work from?

Small Group Prompt

1. Conflict Mapping: Think of a real or hypothetical conflict scenario common in arts units (e.g., faculty disagreements over curriculum, personnel reviews, resource allocation). Map the conflict: Who are the stakeholders? What are the surface issues vs. underlying interests? What resolution strategies apply?