

# The importance of SoTL in creating more inclusive institutional climates

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Decades of research have shown that diversity enhances creativity, productivity, innovation, and teamwork\*.

However, diversity in and of itself does not create a climate of **inclusive excellence**.



\*e.g. Freeman, R. B. & Huang, W., 2015, J. Labor Econ. 33, S289–S318; Hewlett, S.A., Marshall, M. & Sherbin, L., How Diversity Can Drive Innovation, Harvard Business Review, December 2012

## Diversity:

- Necessary but not sufficient for institutional excellence.
- Without inclusion, diversity is an empty gesture.

## Inclusion: affirmation and agency

- Students feel that they belong, that they can be successful, that their contributions are valued, and that the university expects them to be successful.

SoTL as a change agent toward *Inclusive Excellence* – building institutional capacity for student belonging

# Inclusive Excellence...

- an institutional stance of commitment to the process of continuous self-examination and learning.
- not an end point.
- requires the institution to embrace a growth mindset, and to reject deficit-based approaches to “fixing the student.”
- faculty are central, but ownership by all across the institution is necessary.

# Key institutional pre-conditions for reaching potential toward inclusive excellence:

Clearly articulated and shared vision (Theory of Change)

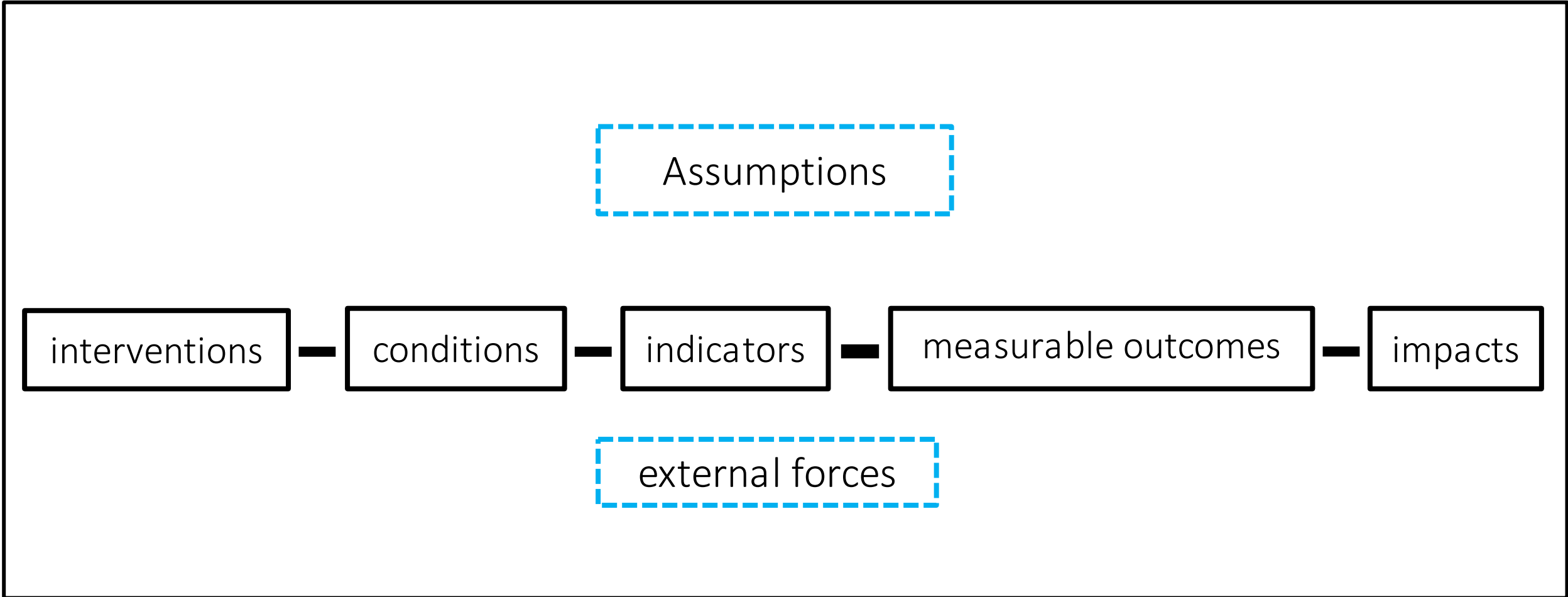
Ongoing shared ownership

Readiness and transparency

Sustainability and capacity building is of primacy

Ongoing evaluation – impact is seen as an ongoing process that does not end with the funding period

# Theory of Change



interventions

conditions

indicators

measurable outcomes

impacts

Assumptions

external forces

Desired objective



What does it look like?  
(climate; measures; structures; etc.)



What primary pre-conditions have to be met?  
(faculty/administrators behaviors and practices)



What pre-pre-conditions have to be met?  
(faculty/administrators beliefs/values)



What practices/processes need to be enacted?



# Change agents to enact the processes of Theory of Change

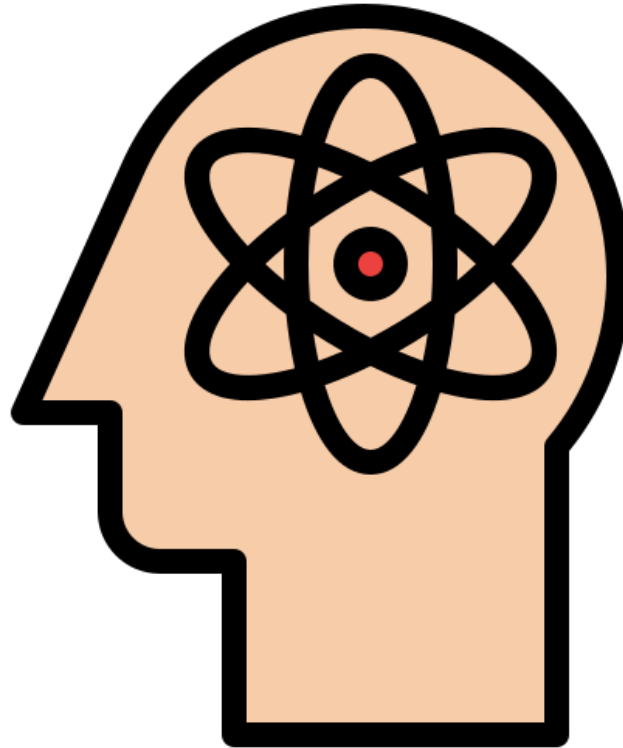
- Change agents need to function at multiple levels of the institution
- Implicit theories of change → explicit theories of change
- Awareness of values and beliefs
- Challenges, opportunities and partnerships
- Sustainability

Supporting change agents through SoTL

Framework for SoTL: Change processes toward advancing diversity and inclusion [based on Kezar *et al.* 2015, *The Review of Higher Education*, 38(4), 479-506.]

Dimensions: What key areas need to be worked on to achieve this vision?	A. What does change look like?	B. What are the goals and measurable outcomes?	C. How will we know we are successful? What benchmarks will be used? How will we document our progress and success?	D. Where are the gaps (e.g. leadership capacity; expertise)? What are the challenges we face (e.g. politics; buy-in; time)?	E. What actions will we need to implement to reach our goals and vision?	F. How will we operate and learn as an organization?
Institutional level						
College/School/ Dept level work						
Individual - faculty, students						
External stakeholders/ partners (if relevant)						

# SoTL as a change agent: a story and experiment about women and physics...



# A story & experiment about women and physics\*

15 min writing exercise

Circle the 2 or 3 most important values and describe in a few sentences why they are important to you.

*being good at art*

*music*

*career*

*sense of humor*

*spiritual or religious values*

*athletic ability*

*belonging to a social group*

*creativity*

*relationships with family & friends*

*independence*

*learning and gaining knowledge*

*government or politics*

\*Miyake et al. (2010). Reducing the gender achievement gap in college science: A classroom study of values affirmation. *Science* 300, 1234-1237.

Women's grades: increased from C to B

Men's grades were unaffected

Your values are important

What you believe is valued

You belong

# I belong and I have something to contribute

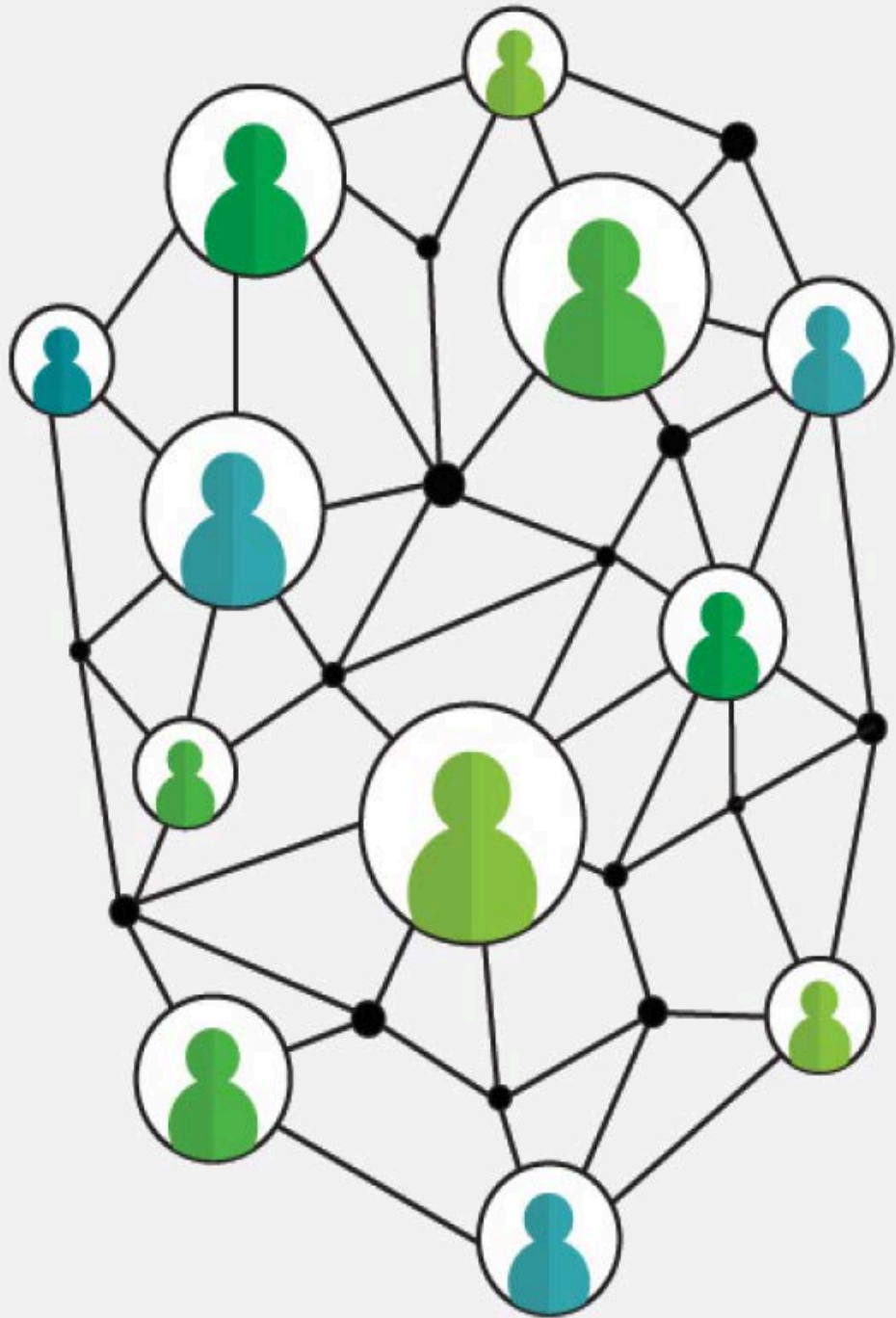
- Values affirmation reduced the male-female performance and learning difference substantially and elevated women's modal grades from the C to B range.
- Benefits were strongest for women who tended to endorse the stereotype that men do better than women in physics.

# Key considerations:

## Data and Impact

- Gathering comprehensive and relevant institutional data that will be instrumental in the change process.
- Ethical use/dissemination of data – impact on faculty biases? Rules vs. practices.
- Implementation fidelity: transferring models across institutions or trying to scale.
- Distinction between the *impact of change* vs. *the process of change*. Impact may be different across the institution, even if the process is the same.





## Additional key considerations:

- Continued resistance of some faculty to accept and engage with the research and evidence on teaching and learning.
- Flawed assumptions that “student success will flow” from faculty development efforts.
- Need to take a systems approach to enact transformative change, and bring together relevant stakeholders to identify and connect existing efforts.

I want my students to experience a pedagogy of wholeness and interconnectedness that allows us to uncover deeper truths about our inner self, our fellow human beings, and our world.

Mays Imad 2019. *Reimagining STEM education: Beauty, wonder, and connection*. Liberal Education 105(2).

Thank you

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