Summary of Themes from Leadership Matters

1. Dedicate the college to a “Big Idea” with a big “why.” Speakers addressed the need to easily formulate and communicate a central mission into a “tag line.”
2. Transformational change is structural not personal. Design with the end in mind came up several times, and this statement reinforces the need to consider the ways that structural changes are more significant than just considering scalability.
3. Conflict is inevitable. All change fosters some level of conflict, either between the past and present or between varying points of view. Conflict, however, can be embraced and managed productively if it is anticipated, inclusive, and respectful.
4. Dialog is essential to the introduction of transformational change. Speakers made the point that many stakeholders from a cross-functional representative group need to be included in the dialog to move the Pathways framework forward. That dialog should be structured, inclusive, and ongoing. Some of the work of early adopters will be in building opportunities to engage dialog about what Pathways approaches mean and imply.
5. Data and questions should be central to the Pathways effort. Speakers made a point that local questions are a good way to begin the conversation about discussing Pathways. Questions included how long it takes students to locally complete; how many units do they have when they complete; what “sticking” points are preventing students from completing; how do students perform in achieving their goals when they leave the college?
6. Re-culturing is key. The culture is malleable and can be shifted with an attention to new values and reminders about they “why” or the “big idea.” Re-culturing, however, requires champions at every level of the institution.
7. Change agents need to give themselves the same permissions offered to students as they learn something new. Educators foster a safe learning environment for learners to embrace new concepts with fearless abandon. They urge students to learn from mistakes in order to move forward to other challenges, as well as be open to feedback while they learn. Leaders can support the risk-tolerance of their colleges by applying these concepts to the change process, not just to students.