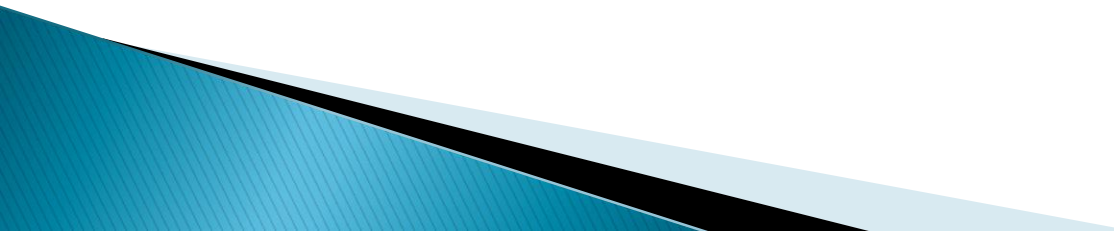


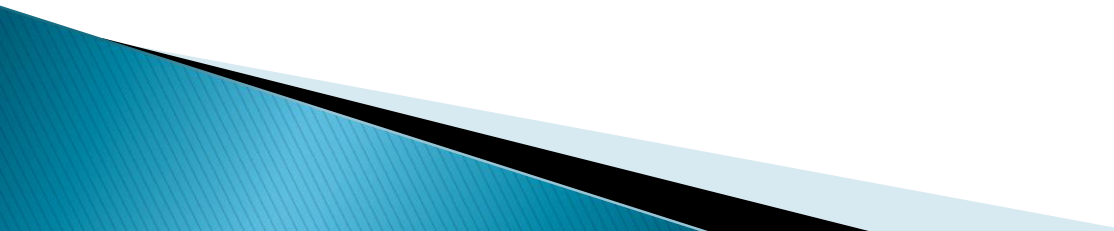
# Developing and Supporting a Community of Inquiry

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# This presentation is not about:

- ▶ A formula for creating a community of inquiry among faculty
  - ▶ A prescription for doing inquiry in a teacher education program
  - ▶ A sales pitch for one set of accreditation standards over another
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# This presentation is about:

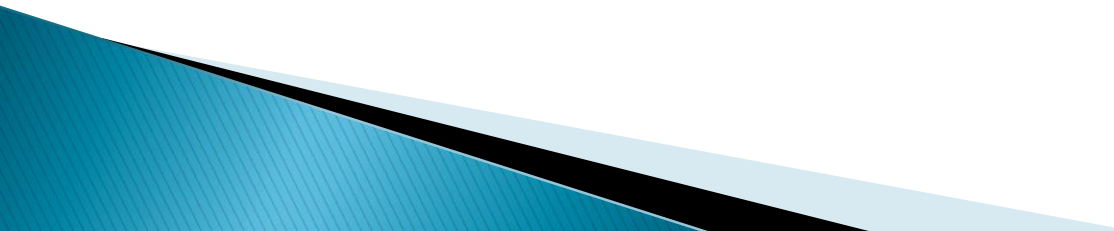
- ▶ Community as a way to organize to do work
  - ▶ Plattsburgh's experience in developing and supporting a community of inquiry among teacher education faculty
  - ▶ The difficulty in differentiating between developing and supporting a community
  - ▶ The need to verify that our teacher education program graduates can make a difference in their students' lives
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# So, what does your organization look like?

- ▶ Draw a picture of the organization in which you currently work.
- ▶ Compare it with your neighbor's
- ▶ Now, with your neighbor, draw another different picture of the organization in which you work

# Is your organization a bureaucracy?

Bureaucracy as THE organizational model is insidious in our culture

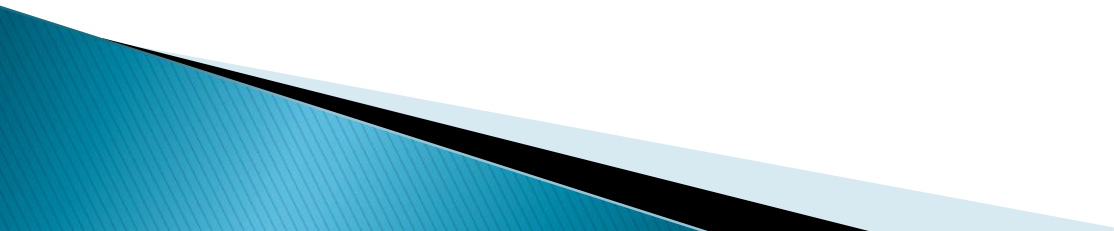
- We think of all formal organizations as being hierarchical
  - We assign power to offices in the organization, not to individuals
  - We segment work and responsibilities by organizing into separate structures (e.g., departments),
  - We recognize a career ladder as moving to higher levels in the organization
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# “Community” as a way to organize to do work

“Community” is perceived as a “flat” organization compared to bureaucracy

- Power and authority are vested in individuals or groups
- Each individual in the organization has a role to play in accomplishing the work
- A “career ladder” is not evident
- Work is organized around individuals according to each person’s abilities and interests

# “Community” characteristics

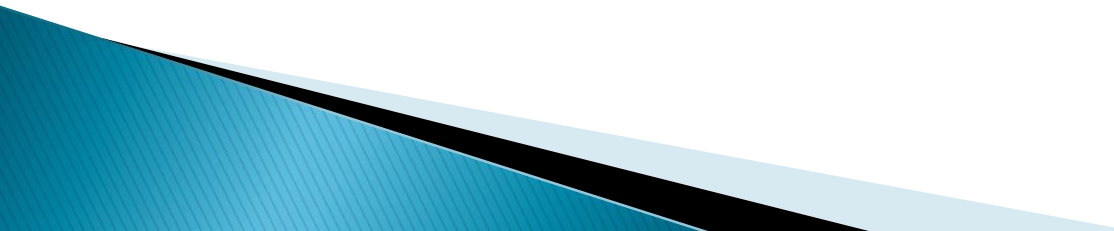
- ▶ Individuals identify common values and common goals – all individuals are included
  - ▶ Each individual knows his or her strengths and what he or she contributes to the work
  - ▶ Each individual has a sense of what the others in the community contribute to the work
  - ▶ Individuals align with the common values and goals – they may not necessarily agree
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**The first task in developing and supporting a community of inquiry is to create the community.**

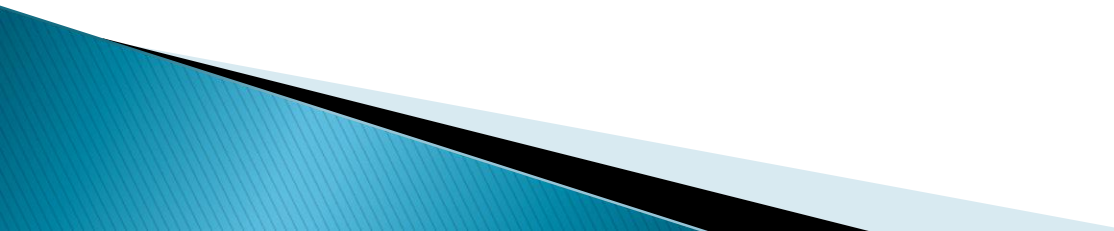
**(Beware of alligators!)**



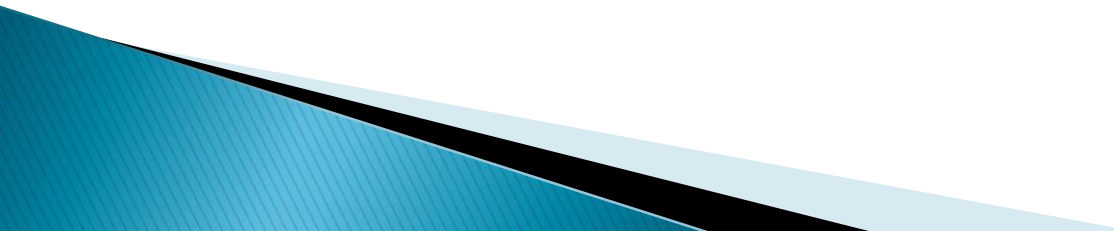
# Challenges to creating “community” in teacher education

- ▶ Elements of tradition
  - ▶ Pernicious autonomy of faculty
  - ▶ Inherited programs and courses
  - ▶ Orientation toward compliance
  - ▶ Co-operating rather than co-laboring
  - ▶ Differing degrees of involvement in operations
  - ▶ Differences of opinion
  - ▶ Hope (beyond hope?) that faculty can agree on something
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# Aspects of organizational culture that foster community building

- ▶ Different areas of expertise represented
  - ▶ Common reasons for getting into the work of preparing teachers
  - ▶ Experience working outside higher education
  - ▶ Luxury of being able to practice content expertise
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# The Plattsburgh situation

- ▶ Programs were not accredited by NCATE
  - ▶ Faculty of 28 in 5 departments – small enough so all could be warmed by the fire
    - Not counting student teaching supervisors and adjuncts
  - ▶ Program courses crossed department lines
  - ▶ “The usual suspects”
  - ▶ The usual processes
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# What we did at Plattsburgh to develop community

## **Retreats that allocated time to collaborate**

Off campus for 2 ½ days – no escape

Common readings for discussions – Senge,  
Darling–Hammond, Wheatley

Agenda focused on fostering alignment, not  
agreement

Reminders: Core values; what it means to be  
a member of a community

# Plattsburgh activities to develop community – 2

## Meetings on campus

Faculty meetings every two weeks on Friday afternoon followed by optional “Whine and Geez”

Arts and Sciences Faculty invited (and some attended!)

Reduced emphasis on department meetings and activity in favor of whole faculty meetings

# Plattsburgh activities to develop community – 3

## **Trust Building Activities**

Established a group of trusted colleagues to advise the dean, develop meeting agendas

Provided transparency and shared decision making in dean's office – care taken not to undermine faculty

Maintained ongoing frequent communication  
Created faculty meetings that were safe

# Plattsburgh activities to develop community – 4

## Meeting Management

Activities organized by Advisory Group –  
jigsaw, carousel, world cafe – to assure  
everyone had opportunity for input

Agenda two days before meeting, minimum

Accommodations made for those who  
couldn't attend meetings for votes

Provisions made for discussing proposals  
outside of faculty meetings

Shared problem solving, writing, readings  
discussions

# What leadership in the community looked like

## **Leadership – Dean and Faculty Advisory**

### **Committee function:**

Provided a sense of direction – a rudder

Met weekly to reflect on progress, to assess the organizational climate, and to plan next steps

Organized faculty meetings every two weeks on Friday, followed by “Whine and Geez” option

Discussed common readings – Wheatley, Heifitz – to ground work and focus discussions


# Some outcomes

- ▶ Procedures implemented for meetings that honor all input in decision-making and focus on alignment of faculty
- ▶ Overall, more positive organizational climate in which to work
- ▶ Faculty turnover – some faculty left and were replaced


Change in the organizational culture is evident in the stories faculty tell prospective faculty and new hires about our program.



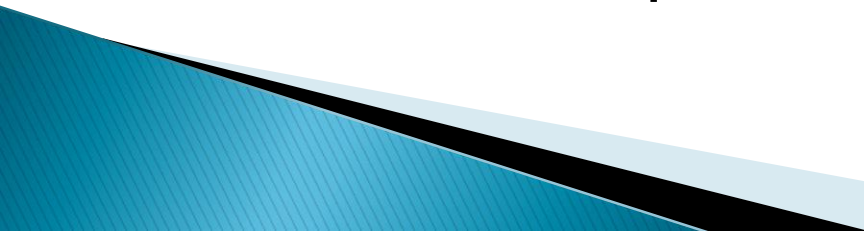
# Some accomplishments of the community

- ▶ Faculty developed innovative programs in teacher education based on research – faculty own the programs
  - ▶ Tolerance for ambiguity
  - ▶ Skill and practice in managing a developing community
  - ▶ Reorganization of faculty into productive work groups – cohort models
  - ▶ Program implementation plan that includes ongoing inquiry into program effectiveness
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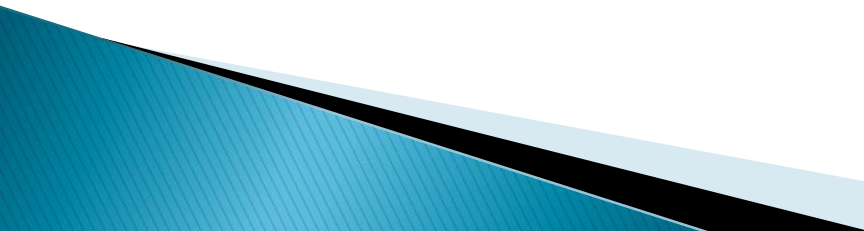
# An example of inquiry

- ▶ When the faculty had redesigned the teacher education programs, we asked what questions we each had about the new programs.
  - ▶ Questions were generated on slips of sticky notes and posted on the wall
  - ▶ Our expert categorizer arranged the questions into 6 groups
  - ▶ Each faculty member selected one categorized question, forming groups of faculty researchers
  - ▶ The research groups met frequently to plan and implement strategies for answering the questions
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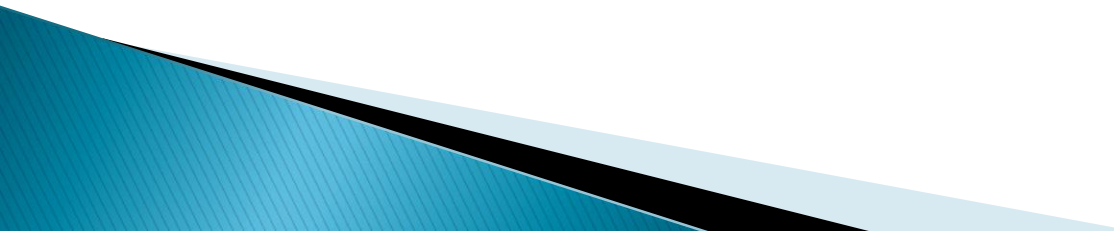
# Faculty researchable questions

- ▶ Do students feel like they are part of the education community? What impact does this have on performance/success in the programs?
  - ▶ What impact do early field placements have on success in student teaching?
  - ▶ How often are faculty in schools and for what purpose?
  - ▶ What evidence do we have that our graduates are applying what they've learned in classes in terms of best practices in teaching?
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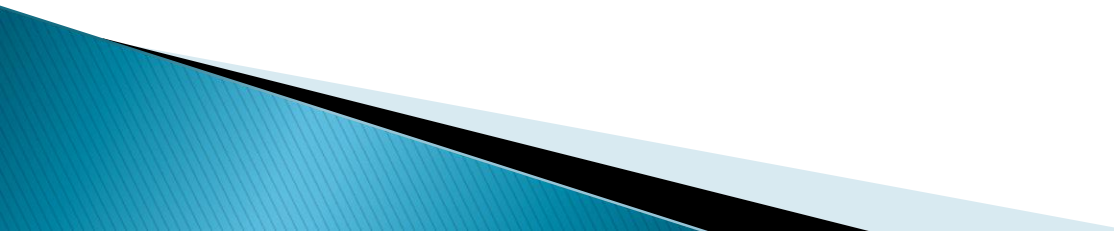
# Sayings for Community Development and Support

- ▶ Give me ambiguity or give me something else
  - ▶ The average American wants to be both a member of the group and a star (Tom Peters in “In Search of Excellence”)
  - ▶ The saddest thing about American Education is that its products can’t imagine it being any different (attributed to Bill Moyers)
  - ▶ Conflict is inevitable; the challenge is to figure out how to manage it
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# More sayings for Community Development and Support

- ▶ Systems self organize
  - ▶ Compliance breeds complacency
  - ▶ Our job in a community is to know what contributions others can make and to know how our unique contribution complements theirs
  - ▶ You're unique, just like everyone else
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# Summary – requisites for Developing and Supporting a Community of Inquiry

- ▶ Orientation toward community as a way to organize to do work, rather than bureaucracy
  - ▶ An Adaptive Challenge (Heifetz) – both an internal and external impetus for inquiry
  - ▶ Leadership – someone who operates from an articulated model of leadership and who models inquiry
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# Summary –requisites for Developing and Supporting a Community of Inquiry – 2

- ▶ Core group of trusted faculty who model inquiry
  - ▶ Willingness of community members to take the risks
  - ▶ Time – a good change process that results in internalized and measurable differences in an organization takes at least 5 years
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