Glass Walls: Examining Barriers to Change in Higher Education

Clarence Glenn, MBA

Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

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Dr. Eve Rifkin, Capstone Advisor

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Dedication

When I was a kid, my dad told me I would do all these fantastic things. Then, he passed away, and that desire to do great things dissipated. For most of my adult life, I have struggled to put myself out there and "go for it." At orientation, I often joke with the students that I could be an attorney like them if I had three years of free time. Having a family and a career almost assured me that the window to pursue something great was closed. Then COVID happened, and I suddenly had more time at home. As I tried putting my then one-year-old daughter to bed, I imagined all the amazing things she might do and how I wanted to encourage her, as my father did me. Then, I thought about the example I wanted to set for her. That night, I researched "top online doctor of education programs," saw Vanderbilt near the top, and promised to shoot for the stars.

These past three years would have been impossible without my wife's love, support, and unwavering dedication. She is better than I deserve, and it has always been my goal to provide for her, and this program has made that more of a possibility. I am thankful for my daughter, who allowed me to not play with her so I could attend class and work on assignments. I am happy to say that playtime availability will skyrocket after Convening III! My family and friends have been nothing but supportive and inspired me to keep progressing through this program. Speaking of the program, my classmates are next-level great, and my life is better due to knowing them. I want to thank the Tribe who raised me on this journey and my fellow Horsemen who kept me in the race. Among the great teachers I have had, I want to thank Doctors Armstrong, Booker, Neel, and Rifkin for teaching me what it means to learn. Thanks to my partner organization, in particular my supervisor and the Dean. Without their support and patience, this paper would likely have been written in 2025! Thank you to everyone!

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Executive Summary

"A diverse, dynamic, and scholarly community that educates students to become ethical, innovative, and multidisciplinary problem-solvers and counselors who pursue justice in a rapidly changing world." - Excerpt from Hillman College of Law's Mission Statement

Hillman College of Law (HCL) relies on a diverse talent pool to cultivate the next generation of legal professionals pursuing justice in a society in need. The diversity of this collection of talent is not culminating in successful changes and organizational improvements. To assess where the barriers to change reside, HCL authorized the development and facilitation of a climate survey for the spring 2023 semester.

Project Problem Statement

Issues in change management are causing HCL to lose students and employees. Per my findings (see p. 42), addressing these issues will improve perceptions of organizational justice and reduce turnover.

Research Questions and Findings

RQ1: What is the current perception of the HCL community concerning the climate of change initiatives at the Law School?
The HCL community perceives a lack of organizational justice regarding change initiatives at the Law School.

Organizational justice refers to perceptions of fairness around various facets of the institution. The findings show that faculty and staff stakeholders negatively perceive justice at the law school. Specifically, the project focused on the dimensions of procedural, contributive, distributive, and anticipatory justice. The faculty survey responses were more negative than staff, though staff responses were not overly optimistic outside of procedural justice.

"I've experienced some faculty who are chairs and all these committees who just don't [adhere to rules]. So, they're not following the protocol. There's no agenda circulated, or minutes prepared afterward, or I'm left off of the invite." – Amelia, Staff.

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Not following the procedure and reducing opportunities for contribution from colleagues creates feelings of doubt from stakeholders in the validity of decisions made by standing committees, and those negative experiences are drawn upon in future initiatives.

RQ2: What does the community believe is essential in implementing a change initiative?
The community wants to better understand why new processes and initiatives are occurring and how the changes impact them.

During the semi-structured interviews, every interviewee was asked what is essential to implementing a change initiative and what would cause an initiative to be unsuccessful. Each participant provided their top two factors, represented in the following chart. An unexpected trend developed, and sensegiving was the most frequent response.
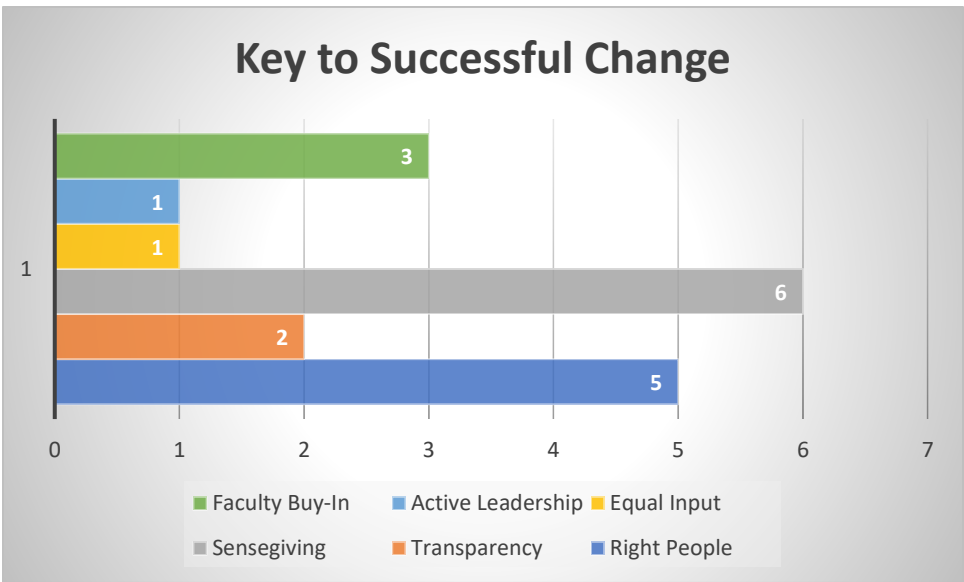
Key to Successful Change

Faculty Buy-In: 3
Active Leadership: 1
Equal Input: 1
Sensegiving: 6
Transparency: 2
Right People: 5

■ Faculty Buy-In   ■ Active Leadership   ■ Equal Input
■ Sensegiving   ■ Transparency   ■ Right People

When attempting to implement a strategic change, the organization must change the community's current ways of thinking and activities for the organization to take advantage of opportunities (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The community must be able to comprehend any departures from the existing way of doing business for the intended change to occur.

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RQ3: What is the current focus for stakeholders in managing change?
Despite their involvement, stakeholders perceive their impact/influence in a process to be minimal due to the involvement of other stakeholders.

When surveyed about readiness for change, respondents had an incredibly high opinion of their personal abilities. ~84% of respondents stated that they were willing to make a significant contribution to change initiatives, and 73.2% of respondents experienced change as a positive process of the organization. Yet, those same respondents devastatingly (75%) feel that plans for future improvement will not amount to much.

> *"It goes back to leadership and whether or not leadership has an inclusive approach to wanting to solicit feedback from various individuals or stakeholders that may contribute in a way that other people may not even expect or think about." – Samantha, Non-Committee Staff.*

Past studies have clarified leaders' influence on employee behaviors through social exchange processes portrayed by social exchange theory. Social exchange theory suggests that a group who believes they are receiving favorable treatment will attempt to return that treatment in an equal manner (Hanh Tran & Choi, 2019). This theory offers an essential theoretical lens on a leader's behavior and its influence on followers' desired outcomes, such as not considering how a change impacts the workforce. When changes adversely affect employees, and it is perceived that leadership does not care, those tasked with executing the changes will have a negative outlook and may not engage with the change in the desired way.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: HCL should be more agile in its approach to addressing high-impact change initiatives. As this project illustrates, the existing standing committees at HCL do not instill strong perceptions of organizational justice. These perceptions were based on stakeholder experiences with leadership and how standing committees were structured. Not all

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discussions about HCL committees were negative, primarily when participants brought up ad hoc committees. Ad hoc committees are formed by the Dean on an as-needed basis. The configuration of the group is dependent on the situation, which offers excellent flexibility and practicality.

Recommendation #2: HCL should alter the structure of standing committees to increase equity in decision-making. The data and findings illustrate that staff do not feel that their expertise and contributions have been valued in the past. Per Kotter's fifth step, HCL must be willing to take risks and embrace nontraditional ideas. HCL should restructure standing committees to provide staff members with votes and an equal say, including the approval of staff chairs for non-academic focuses.

Recommendation #3: HCL should improve organizational justice perceptions and trust through intentional sensegiving. 60.3% of survey respondents felt that future processes would lack equity, leadership should leverage this project's findings to engage with stakeholders. The first step in Kotter's guide is to establish a sense of urgency, and the best way to accomplish this is by helping stakeholders understand why a change initiative is needed. A procedural means of working towards this understanding is to hold semi-annual all-employee meetings and more consistent meetings for staff.

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Introduction

Nothing is happening. On the surface, this may be what uninvolved students and those external to Hillman College of Law perceive when observing the daily operations. While not technically true, there are numerous committees and meetings being held to address areas of improvement for the law school. Yet, the Hillman College of Law (HCL) students are unhappy, and the declining retention rates validate the notion that things are not happening.

When speaking with a group of 3L (equivalent of seniors in law school) students, this sentiment was shared when discussing processes impacting students at HCL. Though classes were taking place and business was being conducted, the students were lamenting the quality and quantity of services offered regarding financial aid, career services, and academics. The Office of Admissions kept data on students' rationale for transferring from the law school. In 2021, the number one cited reason for transferring was scholarship consideration (financial aid), followed by job prospects or the chance to gain employment (career services), and issues with a course (academics). Looking back at those same rankings conducted six years earlier, the number one reason was job prospects, followed by rankings based on mandatory grading curve (academics) and scholarship consideration. The fact that these concerns still exist is an issue, but not the most significant one. The biggest issue is the fact that the circumstances creating these concerns appear to go unaddressed.

Those tasked with addressing these concerns, the faculty and staff, also expressed their unhappiness through increasing employee turnover rates and a lack of process improvement. Employees have experienced considerable amounts of change across the past six years. The organization was acquired by a public university, scrambled to function during the pandemic,

and experienced multiple leadership changes (three Deans in three years). Yet, records prove the concerns students alluded to pre-date all of those events.

The purpose of this capstone was to identify the barriers and facilitators of change within HCL's decision-making processes and understand how stakeholder perceptions of fairness related to the system. One of the primary tools for implementing initiatives for the law school is the standing committees which govern many facets of the institution. As such, I examined the practices of the committees from an organizational justice perspective through observations, a survey, and interviews. Founded on those assessments, this project utilized Kotter's change model and recommended interventions to improve perceptions of fairness and bring about more successful change initiatives at HCL if the organization chooses to test them. Findings from this project might offer insights beyond the standing committees and provide opportunities to explore other decision-making systems at HCL.

<div align="center">**Organization Context**</div>

"Pursuing justice in a rapidly changing world." This charge is part of the mission statement for Hillman College of Law (HCL), a pseudonym for the only public law school in a large midwestern city. HCL earned this distinction after being acquired by Hillman College (Hillman) in August 2019. Before the acquisition, the institution was founded in 1899 as an independent law school with a tradition of diversity, innovation, and opportunity (Huggins, n.d.). Billed publicly as taking "advantage of the natural alignment between [Hillman's] public mission and the law school's commitment to serving students from underserved communities and bridge the justice gap for citizens of [the city]" (Yordy, n.d.), the acquisition was a financial lifeline for the law school, the ~1,000 students it serves, and its ~150 full-time employees.

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The need for a financial lifeline resulted from strategic errors made by past leadership. The law school was an institution for aspiring lawyers and was also run by lawyers. Declining student retention and attrition rates resulted in revenue reduction, while employee (faculty and staff) retention remained constant. A senior staff member described the environment as a "mom-and-pop shop." This moniker stemmed from the organization's hiring practice, where faculty would bring in their colleagues to fill administrative positions, regardless of prior experience. Remnants of this practice exist today; a past posting for a Security Director noted that a law degree was "preferred." Over the past seven years, a strategic effort has been made to recruit talent with higher education experience, even without legal experience.

In June of 2022, HCL welcomed a new Dean of the law school, Hughes, and an opportunity for collaboration presented itself. Hughes is a pseudonym, as are all names in this project, in order to protect participant anonymity. Dean Hughes seeks to foster an environment of student success, diversity, and growth for HCL. "I don't like excuses or complaints. If anyone comes to me to vent, I will do my best to refocus the conversation on what solutions they can contribute to and how we can improve the situation for everyone" (Hughes, personal communication, 2022). Through her three pillars of academic achievement, belonging, and communication, Hughes provided the frames to refocus issues into solutions. At this point in her tenure, she is aware of the law school's recurring problems but not why these issues exist, let alone continue to reappear.

Stating that infrastructure and leadership play integral roles in an organization's ability to change is an understatement. The staff has a defined hierarchy of authority, where many initiatives are subject to the Dean's approval and a standing committee, if applicable. As recently learned, the faculty are not beholden to the Dean. The faculty govern themselves and various

aspects of the organization, causing roles to feel more ambiguous than defined. Fourteen committees oversee organizational issues ranging from assessment and curriculum to student engagement and financial aid. A member of the faculty chairs each committee; only faculty members may serve as chairs. Staff leaders are assigned to committees to be liaisons and are typically not voting/speaking members. There are forty-one executive administrative assignments, and faculty members fill each one.

My initial discussions with the various stakeholders show conflicting beliefs about what transpires when new initiatives are introduced and the factors contributing to a lack of change. Staff members note that a power dynamic exists where faculty hold the most influence on how decisions are handled. Faculty disagree with current approaches to student support and academic regulations, especially post-acquisition. The structure of the committees contributes to a division between the faculty and staff. Some colleagues on the staff expressed frustration with how decisions are made and carried out. Meanwhile, student demand letters have placed fault on the "administration" for lack of progress.

Problem of Practice – What facilitates and hinders change at HCL?

After four years as a public institution, concerns over a lack of progress plague the institution. HCL stakeholders are unhappy, a notion supported by student demands, high staff turnover, and minimal change to standing committee charges. While each of these symptoms is troubling on its own, the inability of the law school's stakeholders to prioritize response and strategy is most concerning.

Numerous initiatives have been enacted to improve the processes of the law school. Writing for the Harvard Business Review, John Kotter (1995) details the eight most common errors organizations commit when implementing a change initiative. Reviewing the first listed

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error, Kotter speaks to the importance of organizations prioritizing the work and generating buy-in, "This first step is essential because just getting a transformation program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Without motivation, people won't help, and the effort goes nowhere" (Kotter, 2017, p. 60). At HCL, the motivation to implement a new initiative is reactionary in that a situation must be capable of impacting the school's public, financial, or academic standing to become a priority.

An example of HCL's reactionary behavior followed the death of George Floyd. One of several initiatives implemented by the law school was to develop an antiracism coordinating committee. One charge of this committee is to vet potential non-academic programs and projects related to antiracism and to help ensure the Law School's accountability to fulfill promises made regarding antiracism. Having a committee dedicated to identifying these issues as a response to the changing social landscape was necessary. A response was also needed earlier that year when a student notified the institution of racially insensitive language in an exam. The momentum for change was not present for the final exam issue, yet the momentum was available after George Floyd. While HCL made public statements about systemic racism and promoted joining the Law Deans Antiracist Clearinghouse Project by submitting a faculty pledge denouncing racism less than a month after Floyd's murder, the law school has yet to make a statement to students or employees about the final exam issue. Organizations like HCL needed to respond quickly in 2020 because they wanted to be associated with supporting antiracism. Doing otherwise would damage their ability to recruit, fundraise, and be marketable. An internal matter, such as that of a student complaint, has less effect on these areas initially. Only when those complaints became demand letters and then protests on the local news were resources fully allocated to addressing the issue.

Fourteen committees govern various functions of the law school, and their charges have remained unchanged for the past three academic years. The law school appears to be stuck in a loop in which they have yet to address past issues, preventing them from strategizing for the future. In an ideal world, the stakeholders will come together consistently for the betterment of students and the institution. Speaking to the theory of collaborative and innovative leadership, Kotter notes that "the challenges of the world require us to bring more of our whole or multiple selves to work, which means that traditional personal and professional boundaries may shift as people get to know one another better" (2012, p. 2). Kotter invites stakeholders to shift their personal feelings for the betterment of the system. Doing this will lead to a more adaptive culture of learning and inquiry. Observing how these stakeholders engage in a new project may illuminate the hidden issues.

HCL developed a climate survey, the first for the law school since 2016, and Dean Hughes authorized sections of the survey to be designed for this project. As such, the project presents an opportunity to observe how all three stakeholder groups perceive HCL's ability to manage change. An organization must have buy-in, not just from department leaders but from every individual, when it comes to changing how they have operated in the past if the organization is to achieve the changes the organization is seeking (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Unless HCL can identify where the barriers to change reside in the organization, it will be near-impossible to implement targeted solutions. "Our problems are multifaceted, and we need to embrace approaches that allow us to see the complexity of the problems that we're trying to solve" (Laird, personal communication, 2020). Failure to identify and address these potential issues will lead to more than a loss of students; it may result in a loss of jobs.

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Review of Literature

Overview

To better understand what is taking place at HCL, prior research into organizational culture, sensegiving, organizational justice, and change management was explored. These four primary topics will be addressed in this section. To begin, the literature on how organizations are impacted by change will be examined. Next, the methods by which the people making up these organizations make sense of the changes. The constructs of fairness will be briefly discussed here and in more detail in the conceptual framework section. Finally, Kotter and change management will conclude this section as the next steps are considered. This review is vital to understanding the problem of practice at the law school, and understanding the various dimensions of organizational justice was necessary for developing a conceptual framework. This literature review also aided in designing the survey, and semi-structured interview prompts to deliver meaningful quantitative and qualitative data.

The Culture Issue

Organizations must overcome numerous challenges consistently. These obstacles range from external phenomena such as societal shifts, technological advancements, and economic instability to internal happenings like evolving employee demographics, consumer complaints, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Peus et al. (2008) noted that it is essential for organizations to address these types of obstacles expeditiously and efficiently. Despite increasing awareness of the importance of change, "somewhere between 40% and 70% of change initiatives fail" (Peus et al., 2009, p. 159). They believe that a successful implementation of a change initiative hinges on the organization's ability to alter the behaviors of those charged with executing the initiative.

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Thi Bich Thuy and Dang Ngoc Yen Van (2020) examined job satisfaction and leadership in employee commitment to organizational change. Noting that "commitment is arguably one of the most critical factors involved in employees' support for change initiatives" (p. 1), they attribute a lack of employee commitment to the high rate of merger and acquisition failures. When these failures occur, many researchers have realized that disregarding and mishandling people (employees, consumers, stakeholders) before and after the acquisition are significant causes of acquisition success or failure.

Ribando et al. (2017) spoke of potential outcomes for organizational culture when an acquisition occurs. One outcome is pluralism. Pluralism happens when the old and the new occupy the same plane of existence. An example would be specific departments or individuals in the law school continuing to operate using the processes implemented before the acquisition. Individuals subscribe to pluralism when they feel the impact of change. Mergers are now associated with "outcomes such as lower morale and job dissatisfaction, acts of sabotage, increased labor turnover and absenteeism rates" (Thi Bich Thuy & Dang Ngoc Yen Van, 2020, p. 2). Resistance to accepting change and wanting to hold on to what is familiar should not be unexpected. Employees are most comfortable and successful when they can make sense of their surroundings, organizational change initiatives threaten that understanding.

Making Sense

While exploring the disconnect between leadership and the rest of the organization in carrying out a change initiative, Ericson (2001) found that there has been a separation between content and process. "Strategic activities have been treated primarily as intentional and as something that concerns a few people at the top of the organizational hierarchy, while implementation has been treated as something more or less unproblematic that follows upon the

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planning activities" (Ericson, 2001, p. 110). When change initiatives are rolled out, the vision is not being presented to those charged with executing in a way that fosters understanding. This is at the core of sensegiving, how organizations help stakeholders create meaning and make sense of their organizational life.

In *Reframing Organizations*, Bolman and Deal (2017) describe the efforts of a crew race as seeming straightforward to observers but complicated structurally. The authors believe that the structural frame reflects rationality and an organization's trust that people have been placed in positions where the system will remove personal issues and allow for peak performance (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This trust depends on how individuals receive their environment and their role in it. Bolman and Deal also acknowledge the significance of the symbolic frame. With the symbolic frame, what happens is less important than what it means. When faced with uncertainty, people create symbols to find meaning. The symbols create an anchor or comfort that allows those making sense of a situation to invest more in the process. This is critical as Cameron and Quinn (2011) suggest that those charged with leading the mission must be completely sold on what is meant to transpire for a change to be successful.

Several change management studies have noted stakeholder buy-in's role in a successful initiative. Fiss and Zajac (2006) build on this by taking a symbolic management viewpoint on strategic change. The authors contend that framing offers an enticing approach to understanding the process of sensegiving, especially with potentially controversial matters. "By framing strategic change and thereby articulating a specific version of reality, organizations may secure both the understanding and support of key stakeholders for their new strategic orientation" (Fiss & Zajac, 2006, p. 1174). Their study stressed the importance of framing to separate what stakeholders believe should be happening from what is happening.

"An organization's culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it" (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). William Tierney believed that an organization's inability to make sense of organizational culture and its role in its positive and negative performance prevents it from facing its issues appropriately. Organizations have made significant strides to improve organizational culture since Tierney's research, but many still need help balancing the workforce's wants with the organization's needs. At both the instrumental and symbolic levels, organizational culture can be viewed in employees' actions and attitudes towards it (Tierney, 1988). How the employees engage in the organization, and their motives, cannot always be viewed by the outside world.

Perceptions of Fairness

Organizational change research illustrates that employees are worried about how a change will impact themselves, their job, and their coworkers (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). One of the primary concerns that these individuals have is organizational fairness. Despite how changes have historically been made, stakeholders will speculate on their anticipated fairness to manage the feeling of uncertainty (Rodell & Colquitt, 2009). The ability to anticipate stems from one's experiences within the organization. How an employee perceives a pending change depends on how that change came to be.

Employee behaviors and motives are often rooted in how they feel about the organization's actions. As such, organizational justice theory is derived from how individuals socially construct incidents of fairness and unfairness. Due to the volatility in how one stakeholder may perceive a situation compared to the next, it is understood that organizational justice is subjective (Poole, 2007). Though subjective in nature, Poole informs that justice is

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socially constructed. Employees' histories and experiences in an organization lead to shared views of justice.

Early research focuses on three aspects of organizational justice: distributive justice (outcomes), procedural justice (process), and interactional justice (relational). Authors Quinetta Roberson and William Scott (2022) explore the intricacies of interactional justice in *Contributive Justice: An Invisible Barrier to Workplace Inclusion*. Their work seeks "to better understand differences in people's capacities for contribution as a hidden inequality" (Roberson & Scott, 2022, p. 1). Exploring whether the system limits a segment of the workforce's ability to engage in meaningful work or have an instrumental voice in how work is done can be helpful.

What Comes Next

Moving to a culture of contributive justice will mean more cross-collaboration across the law school and beyond the university. Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) wrote about the need for parties to take a design approach to cross-sector collaboration. Desired outcomes and expectations can be met when the system is built with the end results in mind, and those tasked with coming together are on the same page. (Bryson et al., 2015, p. 647). The authors discuss the importance of incorporating learning throughout the process to ensure all stakeholders know the goals and performance indicators, a lesson learned and expounded upon by John Jotter.

Kotter spent a decade observing over 100 companies attempting to implement significant organizational changes to varying degrees of success. He stated that the primary lesson to be gained from the more successful cases is that "the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time" (Kotter, 1995, p. 59). This lesson is vital because many organizations neglect to allocate the appropriate resources, namely time, to implement a change effectively. The other critical error that is often overlooked is that mistakes

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can occur at any of the steps to devastating effects. Even the most talented employee has the ability to make a significant mistake.
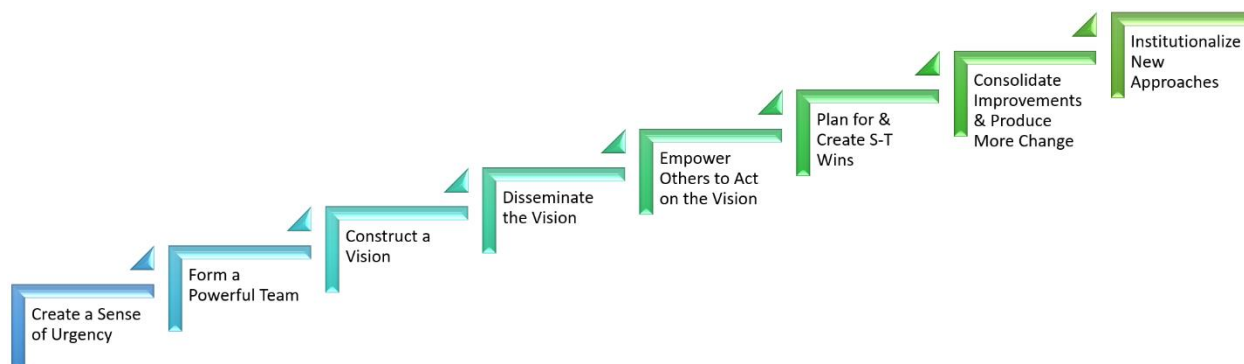

Figure 1. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Though numerous change management models exist, the work of Kotter (1995) is considered by many to be the standard. His eight steps for transforming an organization are an appropriate addition to the framework in that the steps not only influenced the data collection methods for this study but offered a roadmap for implementing successful change throughout Hillman College of Law. Without a plan for moving forward, even small-scale initiatives invite the risk of failure due to the human element.

Change is difficult for numerous individuals and can leave one feeling vulnerable. Argyris and Schön (1978) state that vulnerability leads to self-defense. Some avoid change and the feelings of inadequacy that accompany it. Rather than own these shortcomings, people will "pile subterfuge on top of camouflage" (Argyris and Schön, 1978). When this occurs, it is challenging to know when a person or department is committing errors, the organization moves forward, and the system is falling apart.

Observing how stakeholders behave and act throughout the process will provide insight into how they think about change and its influence on their ability to execute the mission. That is what Laurie Conole (1978) examines in *Process Observation*, the usefulness of process

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observation as a tool to improve the effectiveness of processes. The article provides guidelines on what to observe, but the most valuable information may concern the difference between group content and process. The agenda of the meeting is the content and where most will focus. The process "is how the group is going about meeting its objectives" (Conole, 1978, p. 12).

The fact that failures may occur is not the problem; when we fail to learn from them is a problem (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). Cultures deeply entrenched in an organization's identity and traditions will typically need help generating the buy-in necessary to investigate barriers to improvement. Learning from the errors of the past is essential for sustainable development, and departments may require intervention from external stakeholders to incite action. Despite this, Lozano believes that change originating from internal stakeholders influences organizational change even more than external pressures (2013).

Conceptual Framing

According to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, change is the only constant in life, and HCL is no stranger to this concept. The law school has undergone many changes in the past decade ranging from multiple new Deans, an acquisition, name changes, social justice issues, and a pandemic. Restructurings and reforms are tense periods when employees cope with job insecurity, influencing their organizational commitment (Deschamps et al., 2016). Deschamps et al. understand this while exploring the links between effective leadership and organizational behavior. While acknowledging the importance of leadership in implementing changes, the authors note that justice plays a critical role. Their work is one of many to examine the connection between organizational justice and change.

Novelli Jr. et al. believe that the effectiveness of a change initiative hinges on how adequately justice issues are addressed throughout the process (Novelli Jr. et al., 1995, p. 7). This

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study explores this assertion by utilizing organizational justice as a conceptual framework to analyze how perceptions of fairness influence change initiatives at HCL. Organizational justice perspectives focus on how perceptions of fairness affect organizational behavior (Novelli Jr. et al., 1995). In order to identify the potential barriers and catalysts to change, the study went beyond the surface level of what has transpired. It examined how stakeholders perceive the process, their role in it, and the outcomes. As such, I constructed this framework and added to current understandings of the operational dimensions of justice. This was done by adding the relatively new dimension of contributive justice with the historical dimensions of procedural and distributive justice.
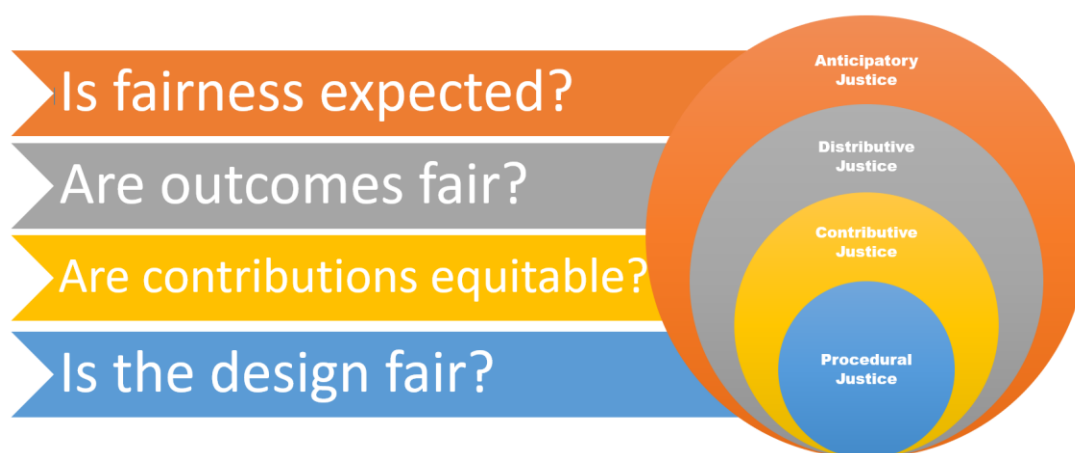

Figure 2. Organizational Justice Frame

Components of the Conceptual Framework

Procedural Justice. While the study focuses heavily on the stakeholders, fairness starts at the design level. Fittingly for this study, the origins of procedural justice can be traced back to Walker et al.'s (1979) article in the *Virginia Law Review*, where they assessed the alternative dispute-resolution models used most in legal settings. They characterize procedural justice as "the individual's belief that the trial of a legal dispute has followed due process" (Walker et al., 1979). Thibaut and Walker (1975) are the pioneers of procedural justice, which focused

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primarily on the decision criteria used to determine outcomes. In subsequent years, researchers such as Debra Shapiro (1993) began operationalizing procedural justice to include voice, where stakeholders are more likely to perceive a process as fair when they can share their side of the story. From a procedural justice viewpoint, this study sought to answer the question, "Is the standing committee process used to make decisions perceived as fair by stakeholders?

Contributive Justice. Since the late '80s, organizational justice research has evolved to account for the interpersonal relationships between those involved in an administrative process, which is "interactional justice." Interactional justice looks at the extent to which those impacted by a decision are treated respectfully. Bies and Moag (1986) initiated the work in this area by focusing on the communication between managers and employees. Greenberg (1990) added to the literature by examining the treatment granted to others. Quinetta Roberson and William Scott (2022) expand upon the current understanding of interactional justice by introducing contributive justice. Their work examines "the fairness of opportunities to contribute to core work processes in workgroups and organizations" (Roberson & Scott, 2022, p. 2). Contributive justice builds from procedural justice and considers how issues of power, access, and having a voice influence an individual's perceptions of fairness during the process. Knowing that the committees governing much of the operations at Hillman consist of representation from faculty, staff, and student stakeholders, the study sought to answer the question, "Do stakeholders feel like their opportunities to provide input and make contributions are fairly distributed?"

Distributive Justice. Most research into distributive justice informs that stakeholders care more about the "perceived fairness of outcomes received" (Konovsky et al., 1987, p. 16) than the actual outcomes. Maiese (2003) suggested that this type of justice hinged on whether people felt the resources and considerations that went into a decision were consistent with past occurrences.

More current research, such as that of Melkonian et al. (2011), connects employee willingness to buy into and cooperate with an organizational decision to distributive justice. Their work is relevant to this study because employee willingness to cooperate in merger and acquisition integration processes was their focus. While this study does not investigate HCL's acquisition, exploring how a potential lack of justice-relevant information impacts the behavior of HCL stakeholders was critical to the project. When using a distributive justice framework, the study asked, "Are the decisions rendered by standing committees fair or perceived to be fair?"

Anticipatory Justice. "Trust and justice play an important role in the process of organizational change to build dynamic capabilities" (Cui & Jiao, 2019, p. 1526). Each workplace encounter with management, the system, and colleagues provides an employee with cues to an organization's intent or characteristics. Past experiences are the basis of what employees use to anticipate what may come and are an essential element of anticipatory justice. "Regardless of the nature of organizational changes, employees may cope with their inherent uncertainty by anticipating how fairly changes will be handled" (Rodell & Colquitt, 2009, p. 989). Perceptions of anticipatory justice can be felt in a change initiative's procedural, contributive, and distributive justice aspects. On the various justice dimensions, "If fully implemented, do stakeholders anticipate standing committee charges will be fair?"

Key Conceptualizations

Definitions for terms such as 'barrier,' 'improvement process,' 'student endeavors,' 'facilitating improvement,' and 'hindering improvement' are needed as their meanings can vary and be subject to individual perceptions. A conceptual construct was provided to ensure the comprehension of essential concepts examined throughout the study. This conceptualization provided standard definitions for items relating to the study's research questions.

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- *Barrier*: For this study, a barrier will be defined using the Merriam-Webster definition of "something immaterial that impedes" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

- *Improvement Process*: For this study, process improvement will be defined based on an article by Sarah K. White as discovering, evaluating, and enhancing existing departmental processes to improve performance, meet industry standards, or improve quality and the student experience (White, 2019).

- *Student Endeavors*: For this study, student endeavors refer to initiatives and functions of a department designed to impact students.

- *Facilitating Improvement*: In this context, facilitating improvement is defined as person(s), policies, or resources that help to bring about process improvement.

- *Hindering Improvement*: In this context, hindering improvement is defined as person(s), policies, or lack of resources that prevent process improvement from occurring.

- *Contribute*. Utilizing Roberson and Scott's (2022) framework, a stakeholder's ability to contribute will be defined as engaging in work significant to the organization and influencing positive change within that capacity (Roberson & Scott, 2022, Figure 1).

- *Charge*. This study uses the definition of a charge Bakersfield College provided its committee members "the tasks and duties of the committee" (*Committee-charge-requirements*, n.d.).

- *Voice*. The extent to which employees can express their views to decision-makers before the final decision (Daly & Geyer, 1994, p.624).

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- *Trust*. Trust in coworkers refers to holding confident, positive expectations in situations involving risk with coworkers (Forret & Sue Love, 2008, p. 250).

Research Questions

With the committees, as mentioned above, as a focus, this study answers the following research questions:

1. *What is the current perception of the HCL community concerning the climate of change initiatives at the Law School?*

The first question was critical to establishing empirical evidence secured through stakeholder responses to the climate survey. The findings from the climate survey supplies Dean Hughes and the leadership team at HCL with insight into faculty and staff perceptions of fairness and change management. This knowledge can be leveraged to make more strategic steps when implementing future initiatives. Additional questions include:

2. *What does the community believe is essential in implementing a change initiative?*

3. *What is the current focus for stakeholders in managing change?*

4. *What can HCL learn from this process?*

Knowing what the stakeholders deem essential from the interviews in executing a successful change initiative provides a path to more effective stakeholder dialogue. Austin and Seitanidi (2012) lament the current state of collaboration in organizations in their work for Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. "There is a lack of a common language and definitional precision about what value is and about the dynamics of how different underlying collaboration processes contribute differentially to value creation" (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012, p. 728). The ability for stakeholders to identify what colleagues value and focus on for a given initiative fosters a common language that leads to more successful endeavors. The last question

may be the most critical to the law school's progress, and the recommendations will offer an evidence-based way to combat the problem. Still, the survey and interview analysis contain key takeaways for stakeholders to learn about their current environment.

Project Design

The primary goal of this project was to examine the Hillman College of Law's relationship with change management. This goal was met by exploring the role of organizational justice in change initiatives. This capstone project aimed to provide HCL with comprehensive and contextual insight into change management within their organization and to create recommendations for future consideration. HCL can use the results of this project to learn and foster a culture that has a positive relationship with change.

This quality improvement project determined 1) the extent to which fairness perceptions influence change initiatives, 2) the Hillman College of Law community's perception of the climate of change initiatives, and 3) what stakeholders believe to be essential in implementing a change initiative. In addition to the quantitative data collected through survey responses, semi-structured interviews provided qualitative components to evaluate organizational justice and change initiative perceptions. HCL is the primary unit of observation, and the faculty and staff comprise the units of analysis.
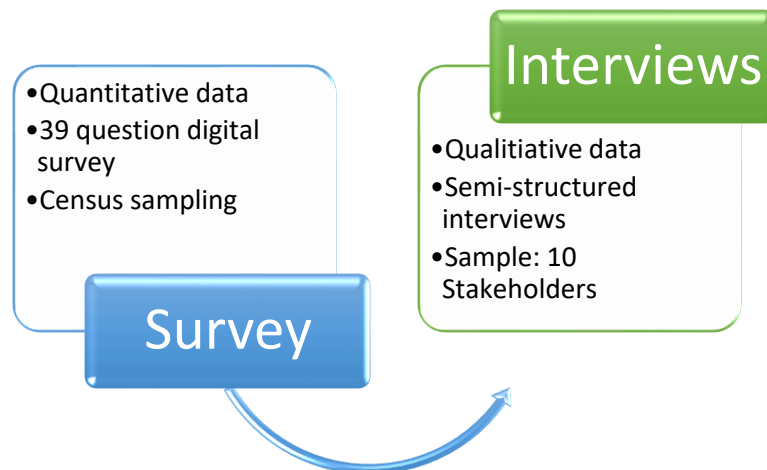
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Figure 3. Key data elements used in this project.

Methods

Quantitative. One means of gathering quantitative data was through a self-administered digital survey sent to all full-time law school employees. Project participants received a survey consisting of 39 questions across three exhaustive and mutually exclusive sections: background data, organizational justice, and change climate (Appendix A). The survey was developed to gain insight leading into the qualitative semi-structured interviews and relied on the combined efforts of Bouckenooghe et al. (2009), Elovainio et al. (2010), and Flint et al. (2012).

The studies led by Elovainio et al. and Flint et al. called upon the scales developed by Colquitt to assess organizational justice. Bouckenooghe et al.'s (2009) work consulted the literature on climate dimensions (Burnes & James, 1995; James et al., 2008; Patterson et al., 2005; Tierney, 1999; Zammuto & O'Connor, 1992) and readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt, Armenakis, Harris, et al., 2007) to inductively generate their items. Like the literature, this survey deployed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

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Questions regarding demographics were designed to improve internal validity and control for the impact of variables that may influence change initiatives, such as time spent with the law school or level of education. The organizational justice section was designed to gauge how individuals perceive fairness throughout the four justice dimensions (procedural, contributive, distributive, and anticipatory). As Tierney stated, organizational culture is more than our actions; it is our attitudes toward it (1988). The last section dealt with change climate directly and set out to have respondents consider their work and the work of their colleagues in that area.

Qualitative. Nine semi-structured interviews with stakeholders were conducted to better understand the survey results and the feelings about change initiatives at HCL. Barriball and While (1994) highlight the benefits of semi-structured interviews. Of the five primary reasons, the two factors that impacted this investigation the most include "the exploration of attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives" and the ability to "facilitate comparability by ensuring that all questions are answered by each respondent" (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 329). The standing committees at the law school are charged with overseeing various functions of the law school, including many of the proposed change initiatives. The nine participants were divided into five categories: committee chair, voting committee member, administrative liaison, student representative, and non-committee member.

The decision to include a non-committee member was to offer insight from community members who are not involved in the process but are affected by the outcomes. It was essential to convey to the participants that these interviews were not meant to assign blame and that the data collected would remain confidential. The purpose was to get the employees' overall impressions of the organization, their perspectives on what is and is not occurring with process improvement, and why.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom. The platform provided several benefits, including a transcription function that allowed for a focus on non-verbal communication and created a more engaging environment. Another benefit was the ability to record the interviews. Barriball and While (1994) note, "The use of audio tapes when permitted has ensured that an identical replication of the contents of each interview is available, which will facilitate analysis" (p. 332). The interviews are expected to last no more than 30 minutes and feature twelve questions derived from the conceptual framework and the research questions (Table 1).

Conceptual Framework	Research Question	Semi-Structured Interview Questions	Validation Source
Procedural Justice	*What does the community believe is essential in implementing a change initiative?*	-Are the processes committees use to make decisions fair? -How are committees and charges formed? -To what extent do you believe that the right people are engaging in these processes?	Hough et al., 2013
Contributive Justice	*What is the current perception of the HCL community concerning the climate of change initiatives at the Law School?*	-What has been your experience working on new policies/procedures as a committee member? -How have you been able to contribute to discussions around new initiatives? -Does every committee member have an equal say in how committee charges are approached?	Roberson & Scott, 2022
Distributive Justice	*What is the Hillman College of Law community's perception of the climate of change initiatives?*	-How well do you believe the law school manages change? -In what ways have you noticed colleagues responding to outcomes that they disagree with?	Boddy & Macbeth, 2000
Anticipatory Justice	*What can HCL learn from this project?*	-What is the primary barrier to implementing an initiative? -When an initiative is implemented, what factors contribute to that success?	Weber & Weber, 2001

Table 1. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Sampling. This project employed census sampling because the survey was administered

to all faculty and staff at HCL, and there was an equal chance of selection for all. The sample

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was derived from random selection. As this investigation plans to examine the relationship, if any, between perceptions of organizational justice and willingness to implement change initiatives, this type of sampling is appropriate to quantify the issue and illustrate the depths of what is taking place.

As it relates to the interviews, purposive non-probability sampling will be used to conduct this analysis. Purposive non-probability sampling was possible due to personal conversations I have had with members from all departments at HCL as part of a recent diversity audit, in addition to noted comments at town halls and employee gatherings. Selection bias threatens external validity and can limit how the findings are extrapolated for the entire organization.

Response Rate. Hillman College of Law developed a climate survey, and the Dean permitted a portion of the survey to be influenced by the conceptual framework. The surveys were administered before midterm exams during the spring semester to ensure an appropriate response rate. Through personal conversations, it was discovered that the three-week period before spring break (March 20-27) was when their departments had the most bandwidth and would be willing to accommodate interview requests. The desired response rate was 80% of the employees, which was thought to be an attainable goal due to the attachment to a school-wide initiative. Participants had ten business days to complete the survey created via Qualtrics.

Participant Consent. Participation in this project was voluntary, and an announcement was made at the February faculty and staff gatherings to guarantee informed consent. One week before the surveys are administered, all employees received an email outlining the project's details and objectives. When the surveys were emailed out, the communication body re-emphasized that participation was voluntary and shared the same message at the beginning of all

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interviews. Those who wanted to refrain from participating could opt out by selecting that option at the top of the survey or declining the invitation to an interview.

Proposal Defense

Presenting this research proposal to the Institutional Review Board without addressing internal and external validity, ethical issues, and limitations would have constituted negligence. This proposal was mindfully developed, and every attempt has been made to protect the participants' identity and the findings' reliability. Protecting identities is essential because there may be concerns about retaliation. Participants needed to feel they had been afforded a safe space to express themselves openly and honestly. That honesty aided in identifying potential causes of process improvement issues.

Limitations. While the surveys provided anonymity and space to respond freely, the interviews did not. Departmental leaders and their staff could have shared physical space during an interview. This would have prevented the staff from expressing themselves, primarily if their concerns revolved around the department's leadership. Likewise, a leader may want to respect their team and avoid risking morale if they feel that change initiatives tend to stall due to the ineffectiveness of the staff. In the future, in-person interviews would be recommended to allow for more free-flowing exchanges.

The timing of the project was another limitation. While an optimal investigation timeframe has been identified, this left little room for error. Issues at a school could have arisen anytime, and what may have appeared to be an open window today closed quickly in March. The timing was also why ten interviews were scheduled to be conducted. Given the time restrictions and recent staffing shortages, it would have been too much of a strain on the departments to have team members unavailable at various points during an active school term.

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Content Validity

A panel of ten judges validated the questionnaire developed by Bouckenooghe et al.; the other two surveys that influenced this prompt were developed from the organizational justice scales developed by Colquitt. Collectively, the prior works offered several options for this project. In an attempt to keep the investigation and the participants manageable, specific prompts were selected based on their ability to be applied to the conceptual framework and the setting of this project. This action may have compromised the validity of the investigation.

Internal Validity

A potential threat to internal validity was spillover that could have occurred if those who took the survey early had discussed the prompts and their responses with prospective respondents. A random census sample was meant to pull data from various independent sources. If someone in student life spoke with someone in the marketing department about the survey and their takes, that may have influenced how the marketing professional responded. Similarly, this concern extended to the interviews. Whichever participant went first had the potential to discuss what took place with colleagues in other selected departments. Those individuals could have prepared for the interview and provided less authentic responses. Solving this in the future would require nondisclosure agreements and more administrators to assist with the interviews, so the sessions would not be scheduled in a way that allows for spillover.

The other two threats to internal validity were testing and attrition. These items were considered threats because the participants knew they were part of an investigation as part of the agreement, which could have altered how they responded and behaved. Along that same thread, someone who did not feel they could have participated in a way that is true to them may have felt

uncomfortable being on the record and decided against speaking out. This could have led to an ideal interviewee not participating if selected.

External Validity

Given the complexity of the research questions and the focus centering on one organization, the generalizability of the findings may need to be revised for other institutions. The law school community in this geographic area is relatively small, and many of the faculty and staff at various schools interact with one another through personal and professional networks. Those relationships could impact how other schools would respond to this type of investigation.

Additional threats to external validity included the influence of a person, organization, or another factor on whether an individual chooses to engage in change initiatives is highly personalized and distinctive. While one department may be influenced to improve its operations because of the findings, another may not be spurred to action because of that same data and look to other items when deciding to act, which speaks to the fact that departments and employees have a choice. Choice also threatens external validity as those who choose to participate may feel more strongly about change management than those who opt not to participate, resulting in skewed results.

Ethics

Ethical concerns for this investigation centered on retaliatory action. No individual should have felt forced to participate in the investigation, but they could have felt they had no choice regarding the survey. Opting out could have been viewed as an act of dissension amongst the team. This may cause the person who opted out to be concerned that they will be mistreated

for not participating. Also, those in the interviews could have been pressured to align with their superiors and not want to behave in a way that would be viewed as a threat to their employment.

Students needed to be protected at every step. Some students and student groups are more vocal than others, and their feelings may be widely known across the institution. The findings that came from conducting an investigation that focused on change initiatives related to student endeavors could lead to faculty and staff placing the blame on that vocal group of students and lead to seemingly unfair treatment.

Furthermore, I had to remain aware of the opportunities for spurious behavior that the investigation may have provoked. This project aimed to identify barriers to process improvement and allow for targeted solutions. If an individual or department perceives the project as an attack on their way of doing business, they may take pre-emptive measures to be viewed as working for improvement. The stakeholders at HLC need authentic change and to feel that the organization is committed to supporting them. The perception that initiatives were being implemented for appearances would not solve the problem and may have caused more barriers being formed to future improvement opportunities.

Finally, one of the biggest concerns for the project was remaining neutral throughout the process. As an organization employee, experiences and intimate knowledge of certain happenings are a given. That experience and personal bias can skew the analysis to fit a self-serving narrative, which was combatted by relying on the literature and data gathered.

Analysis Plan

Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data collected through surveys and interviews regarding organizational justice and change management required a multi-step, iterative method. "To obtain veridical results from an empirical investigation, the data collected in it must have

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been accurately entered in the data file submitted to the computer for analysis" (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2008, p. 61). Raykov and Marcoulides note that errors in data entry led to inaccuracies in parameter estimates and test statistics; worse, the errors could yield misleading conclusions. Accounting for this risk, the first step was to utilize the data and analysis feature in Qualtrics to conduct a fundamental statistical analysis of all survey responses. Qualtrics provided data on descriptive statistics (standard deviation, mean, response frequency) and performed a multivariate analysis where two or more variables were analyzed simultaneously, specifically comparing faculty and staff responses. Once the initial findings from the survey were explored, interview data assisted in understanding the remaining research questions.

I recorded the interviews via Zoom. This allowed for the use of the transcription function and allowed for more focus on observing the participants and taking field notes. The initial pass at the findings provided space for reflection on the conceptual framework that drives this project. Next, the audio recordings were uploaded to Otter.ai to assist in refining the transcripts. The transcripts were then reviewed while listening to the recordings to ensure accuracy before coding commences. Coding was conducted manually using the coding tree exhibited in Figure 4.
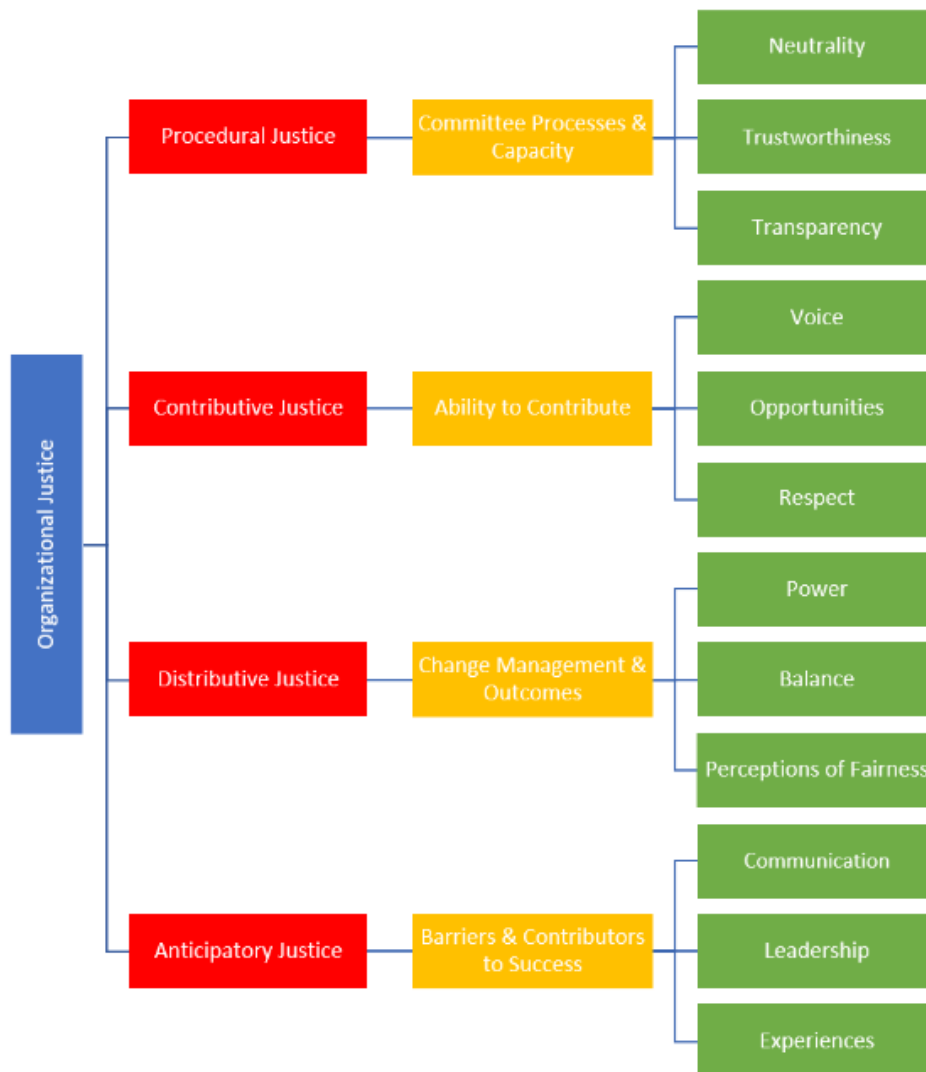
Figure 4. Qualitative analysis code tree.

As with the interview questions, the organizational justice framework laid this code tree's foundation. The first branches stemmed from the themes of the questions being asked. The subsequent branches are rooted in the literature and stand out from the initial review of the transcripts. After the interviews have been coded, organizational roles, committee responsibility, and gender will be assigned to continue the constant comparison method. Excel was used to develop a codebook (Appendix C), the coded excerpts were categorized based on the descriptors, and relevant quotations were connected as evidence.

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As this study used mixed data collection methods to address the same problem, a method triangulation is appropriate (Polit & Beck, 2012) for the last step. The first step was to examine the semi-structured interviews. The themes and responses were then compared to field notes from past site visits and observed meetings. Finally, the survey data was explored. Going to the survey data last allowed the interviews and field notes to serve as evidence to support or diminish survey responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection went according to the plan described in the "Project Design" section (p. 21) The climate survey responses exceeded expectations primarily due to the Dean's support and enthusiasm for the project. While 80% was desired, the goal was to secure enough responses to generate a usable sample of 50%. This percentage would exceed the recommended 40 participants by the Nielsen Norman Group for a quantitative study (Budiu & Moran, 2021). The Qualtrics survey was open for two weeks, and 73 of 150 full-time employees (faculty and staff) completed the survey, or 48%. Ideally, the survey would have remained open another week. As predicted, time was a challenge. The survey needed to close so that a different survey connected with an American Bar Association requirement could be administered. Despite this, there is sufficient data to answer the relevant project questions.

The semi-structured interviews, similarly, went well. Of the planned ten interviews, nine were conducted. As noted earlier, the plan was to interview two individuals not assigned to a committee to examine how non-committee members perceive the law school's approach to change and the dimensions of organizational justice. Due to a scheduling issue with a non-committee member, nine interviews were conducted instead of ten. Still, given the timeline for

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this project, I decided to move forward into analysis without this interview. The data from the completed interviews is enough to answer the relevant project questions.

Research was conducted to identify the appropriate identifiers for coding the semi-structured interviews. Leventhal (1980), for example, found tenets to assess the fairness of procedures, also known as procedural justice. Those items are listed under the "Rules" column in the codebook (Figure 1). Similarly, the rules used to identify examples of contributive, distributive, and anticipatory justice are listed in the corresponding row.

Pseudonyms were created for each participant, and a description (gender and role) can be found in Appendix B. A table for the following examples can be found in Appendix C. Using the rules, the recordings were listened to multiple times to identify instances of the framework being brought up by participants. For example, regarding procedural justice, Samantha's quote (Appendix C) speaks to a consistency issue within the committees: "I find that depending on the committee, it might be delayed, deliberated differently, or longer." If a committee is meant to provide updates within a certain amount of time and that is not happening due to who leads the meeting, which is a procedural issue.

Diane says, "If the committee emanates from the faculty, then the faculty feel empowered by that. The staff may feel [they have] less of a voice, right, especially if they don't have a vote", and this is precisely what Roberson explores in contributive justice. Individuals need to feel that they have an opportunity to speak and have input in the process to perceive a level of fairness.

Jan, a student representative, notes, "It appears, from my perspective, that there's kind of a division in the law school on those who liked the change and more in favor of the change and wants to change and then those who are very uncomfortable with it." Her observations are examples of organizational citizenship behavior and organizational commitment. Both are rules

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that exemplify distributive justice. Lastly, anticipatory justice is prevalent in Dave's comment about committee resistance to a change brought about during COVID. "And there was significant resistance on our committee to the idea of being made to teach anything online."

The crosstabs function in Qualtrics was used to facilitate a multivariate analysis of the survey data. The function provided descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for each prompt and participant information. To examine if identifying information contributed to response variations, I collected participant data such as role, gender, and race/ethnicity. The table below represents how the responses vary concerning the survey scales. Each organizational justice dimension survey scale contained four statements, and Qualtrics provided a cumulative mean and standard deviation for each. The table showed that the dispersion of responses was more significant in the contributive and anticipatory justice dimensions.

		Role		Race/Ethnicity			Gender			
	All	Faculty	Staff	White	P.O.C.	Decline	Male	Female	Non-Conforming	Decline
	n = 73	n = 25	n = 48	n = 35	n = 30	n = 8	n = 25	n = 40	n = 2	n = 6
Procedural Justice										
Mean	2.4	2.9	2.2	2.4	2.2	3.3	2.5	2.3	1.5	3.8
σ	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.7	1.1
Contributive Justice										
Mean	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.7	2.3	3.0	2.4	2.5	2.6	3.3
σ	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	0.9	1.6	1.2	1.2	2.3	1.3
Distributive Justice										
Mean	2.6	2.9	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.8	3.3
σ	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.4	1.1	1.0	2.5	1.3
Anticipatory Justice										
Mean	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.8	3.2	2.9	2.8	2.5	3.7
σ	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.2	2.1	1.3

Table shows mean and standard deviations (σ) for variables by demographic groups. The higher the mean score, the more negative outlook a group had regarding that justice dimension.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

The survey also captured data on HCL's climate pertaining to change. Qualtrics allowed the responses to be represented by percentages and the scale options to be bucketed. As demonstrated in the figure, bucketing the options meant that responses of "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" were combined into a bucket that was titled "Agree." All other options were bucketed to

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count as "Disagree." This formatting compared how faculty and staff felt about the conditions contributing to a culture of change, as seen in the chart.
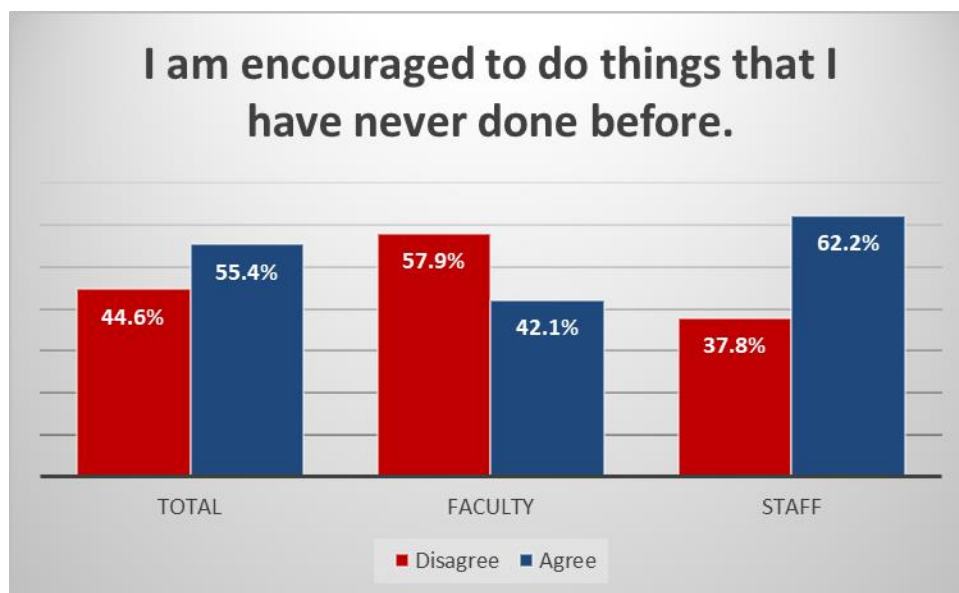

Figure 5. Bucketing Example

Findings

Based on the project's design, I arrived at three primary findings. The first finding corresponds with the first research question as it addresses the current perception of the HCL community concerning change initiatives. The second finding centers on the community's desire to better understand new processes and initiatives and is a suitable response to the second research question. The final finding is related to the third research question regarding where the community's focus lies in managing change. As a reminder, pseudonyms were used for all interview respondents to ensure confidentiality.

Finding #1

> RQ1: What is the current perception of the HCL community concerning the climate of change initiatives at the Law School?
>
> The HCL community perceives a lack of organizational justice regarding change initiatives at the Law School.

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	Faculty		Staff	
	Negative	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Positive*
Procedural	57.5%	42.5%	28.9%	71.1%
Contributive	51.3%	48.7%	40.1%	59.9%
Distributive	64.3%	35.7%	45.3%	54.7%
Anticipatory	63.8%	36.2%	55.3%	44.7%

Figure 6. Organizational Justice Heatmap

The heatmap illustrates how faculty and staff perceive this project's various organizational justice dimensions. In the illustration, responses 60% positive and above produces a dark green shade, and 60% negative and below produces a dark red. The closer responses get to 50%, the lighter the shade gets to yellow. The faculty survey responses were more negative than staff, though staff responses were not overly optimistic outside of procedural justice. Surprisingly, faculty have an overwhelmingly negative perception of organizational justice, though contributive justice is relatively moderate.

Staff perceive justice less fairly as they move throughout the process, from procedural to anticipatory. The 71.1% positive response to procedural justice is a shocking result and was a divergence from the staff interview responses. A potential answer as to why the staff results were as positive was because most of the staff had little to no exposure to the standing committees at HCL. While every faculty member served on at least one committee, only seven staff members had a role across all standing committees. This would mean that, at best, 85.5% of staff responses were related to other areas of the law school.

Procedural Justice

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Faculty		Staff	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
57.5%	42.5%	28.9%	71.1%

The survey findings align with interview responses from the faculty participants. When asked if they perceived the processes used by committees to make decisions to be fair, all four responded yes. A design flaw within the existing system meant to form a powerful guiding coalition has caused more splintering than binding between faculty and staff. Amelia, shared her experience as an administrative liaison on the standing committees:

> *"I've experienced some faculty who are chairs and all these committees who just don't [adhere to rules]. So, they're not following the protocol. There's no agenda circulated, or minutes prepared afterward, or I'm left off of the invite." – Amelia, Staff.*

The lack of protocol signaled an issue in procedural justice, where process fairness is examined. Consistency is a tenet of this dimension, and the interviews showed that consistency was at the mercy of the chair, as Diane informed me:

> *"The committee chair is instrumental. Who you choose, who the dean, in consultation with the executive committee, chooses to chair a committee is really important, because if the chair is organized, and on top of it, things will move along. If the chair is just too busy, say, I don't even judge the person. Sometimes, there's the rest of the committee who doesn't feel they can step up to move things along." – Diane, Faculty*

This issue of consistency was prevalent across all interviews and observations. A committee representative provided an update on their team's work during a faculty assembly meeting. Upon completing their report, a former committee member interjected that they believed the matter had been resolved during their time on the committee. The consistency issue in this occurrence derived from the fact that the charges the committees were given had widely gone unchanged across the past three years. This might be interpreted as a sign that the organization failed to address current issues and has not progressed due to unchanged charges.

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Contributive Justice

Faculty		Staff	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
51.3%	48.7%	40.1%	59.9%

Currently, only faculty members are voting members of the governing committees. As such, contributive justice might be easier for faculty to perceive, evidenced by the dimension containing the highest positivity score (48.7%). This dimension is where staff positivity begins to decrease in the findings. Michael spoke about why staff may not contribute as much as the faculty in committee meetings.

> *"If it's not a high-level administrator serving as the administrative liaison, there could be an intimidation factor there. You know, all faculty can be kind of eager to talk, and they can kind of crowd out the field sometimes." – Michael, Faculty Chair*

Michael believes there may be an intimidation factor for non-executives working with the faculty in this environment. Roberson and Scott inform that equity is expected to embody policies and processes to remove bias that reduces equal opportunities among various social classes (2022). Equity is a facet of many committees that staff believe is missing. Samantha stated that her title afforded her the credibility to speak, but concerns exist on how far her words would go when voicing a concern about an initiative.

> *"I could voice it; I just don't know how much weight it would be given. I think that, yes, I would be able to say, "Hey!" But I don't know, necessarily that it would be utilized or incorporated into a final decision." – Samantha, Non-Committee Staff*

Anne shared a similar sentiment:

> *"I feel like I've been treated like an equal. That's probably because of the committee's that I'm on. If I were, for some reason, assigned to the Academic Affairs Committee, I think I would not be treated like an equal because of my educational background, because of my role as staff versus faculty." – Anne, Staff*

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Anne's response supports the findings and personal conversations with stakeholders inferring that there is a power dynamic at HCL where faculty hold the most influence in how decisions are handled. The individuals in power have similar backgrounds, education, and professional experiences, and tend to stick together. This type of bias is known as affinity bias and is prevalent within legal institutions. "Due to the prevalence of affinity bias, the legal profession can best be described as a "mirrortocracy"—not a meritocracy" (Nalty, 2016, p. 46) Nalty notes that the primary hurdle for legal organizations to become a true meritocracy, where ability and merit is the basis of one's power and influence, is for legal professionals come to terms with unconscious biases.

Distributive Justice

Faculty		Staff	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
64.3%	35.7%	45.3%	54.7%

The earliest research into distributive justice mainly focused on the fairness of decision outcomes. Colquitt (2012) expanded on this and found that people's perception of fairness responds to outcome allocations by comparing their outcomes to what has transpired previously. With this understanding of distributive justice, the survey showed that faculty found injustice in this area. Notably, a lower percentage of staff (45.3%) perceived distributive injustice. As with the procedural justice dimension, an assumption behind this positivity comes from the lack of exposure to committees for staff. As the dimensions begin to skew negative for staff, HCL should become more concerned as the negativity would be due to their perceptions of injustice originating in other facets of their work in this area. The cumulative histories of the faculty and staff who perceive distributive injustice within HCL led to these responses. Figure seven shows

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that more than half of all respondents disagreed with the statement that outcomes always reflect the contributions and efforts put into the work. are consistent with past occurrences.
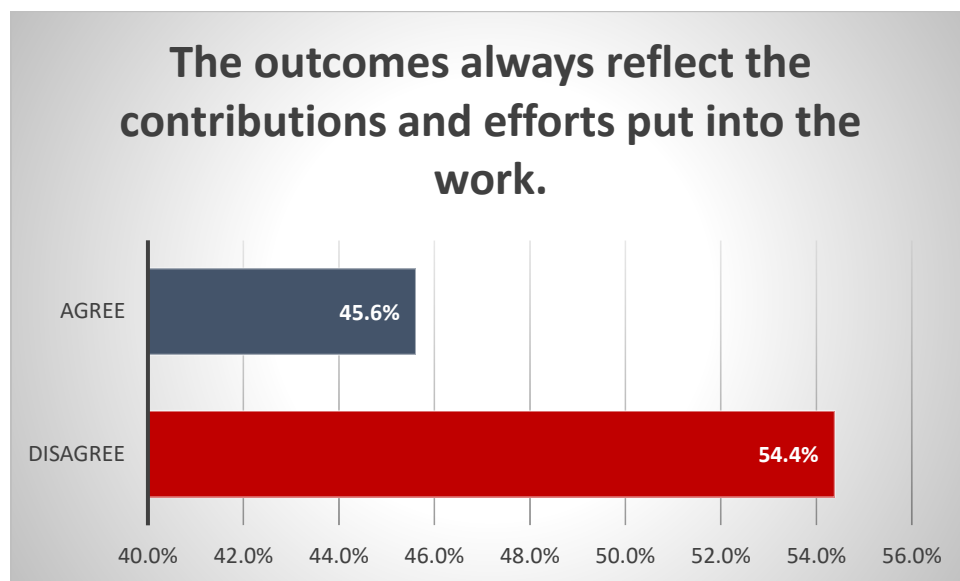

Figure 7. Distributive justice dimension.

When distributive justice is lacking, stakeholders believe they are receiving unjust treatment and will question the system (Mulgund, 2022). Anne considers herself someone who accepts decisions from leadership and attempts to make the changes work. Still, she testified to Mulgund's theory and questioned the systems at HCL.

> *"In terms of what's the expectation, we know what the expectation is. But there is no enforcement of it. And so, I think that leads to some pretty bad feelings about change. Like why is it required of me and not this other person? Why am I putting in the work to embrace this when other people are not?" – Anne, Staff*

As stakeholders question the system and observe colleagues willingly resisting change, trust begins to erode. Justice perceptions are likely related to trust in coworkers and morale. Forret and Love wrote, "If employees believe that distributive justice exists, then they will feel that people receive the rewards they deserve, and that they are not being taken advantage of unfairly" (p. 251). Staff are not alone in having a negative view of distributive justice. Dave discussed his diminishing trust in colleagues and provided an example from a recent initiative.

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"Professor Bostic put together a diversity curriculum to be taught to supplement classes, of course, from what I've heard indirectly, some professors are doing it, some are not. And the faculty had voted that yes, we would do it." – Dave, Faculty.

This shows that regardless of how the decision was made, in this case a vote, some will decide to act against the initiative. Regardless of title, employees are choosing to disregard the outcome of a decision that, by all accounts, was rendered fairly. This is an example of poor civic virtue, a dimension of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB describes telling habits, not bound only to those documented in employment agreements, and shared norms, which are not formally recognized by the organization (Hanh Tran & Choi, 2019). Poor OCB is a sign of negative perceptions of distributive justice. Employees should act in a responsible manner for the good of the organization. If not, the organization will suffer due to poor morale and ineffective implementation.

Anticipatory Justice

Faculty		Staff	
Negative	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Positive*
63.8%	**36.2%**	**55.3%**	**44.7%**

While prior research shows that employees are more apt to partake in negative behaviors when they perceive distributive injustice, Shapiro and Kirkman's (1999) study connected those behaviors with employees anticipating injustice. Negative perceptions of anticipatory justice are rooted in how the community has experienced changes in the past. A lack of representation on a committee, not having input valued, or noticing a decision is not being adhered to are examples that lead to anticipating injustice and were all expressed by interviewees. Anticipating injustice causes low morale and negative attitudes about the organization they belong to and the outcomes it produces (Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999).

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> *"I feel like the law school as a whole doesn't want to change. So, when it comes up, it's a little bit of a struggle before that change actually occurs. So, I would say it's more defensive towards change." – Joyce, Student Representative.*

This quote came from Joyce, a student, when asked about her experience with change initiatives on HCL committees. Experiences also occur at the interpersonal level, as noted by Mia. She spoke about her treatment by faculty colleagues upon gaining an administrative title.

> *"There are some people on the faculty who just automatically treat you differently. They expect different things from you. I think, again, because of the history of our institution, they kind of feel like, oh, now you're part of the problem." – Mia, Faculty Chair.*

Colleagues making each other feel bad is an issue in and of itself. Still, Mia's comments speak to anticipatory justice, and the idea that being associated with a different population equates to adverse outcomes in the future. Anticipatory justice was the lowest perceived dimension by the community, and how the community feels about future processes and outcomes is a significant reason.

		Total	Faculty	Staff
Future processes will be equitable for both faculty and staff.	Disagree	60.3%	70.0%	55.3%
	Agree	39.7%	30.0%	44.7%

As shown in the figure above, both faculty and staff believe that future processes will not be equitable. This is a sentiment Amelia shared.

> *"I don't know exactly what I'm supposed to do in this committee, or I'm not being asked or something because I'm a junior staff member or faculty "runs stuff" and decides everything anyway." – Amelia, Staff.*

Amelia's quote is consistent with personal conversations with various staff members and may indicate institutional discrimination. Institutional discrimination takes place through positioning and is the coming together of individual traits that are structured in ways that encroach on the potential actions (interpersonal, intergroup, and intrapersonal) when assigning rights, duties, and responsibilities to a person (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999).

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Not all discussions about HCL committees were negative, primarily when participants brought up ad hoc committees. Ad hoc committees are formed by the Dean on an as-needed basis. The configuration of the group is dependent on the situation, which offers excellent flexibility and practicality. During the interviews, stakeholders extolled the virtues of ad hoc committees. They spoke to understanding the charge and excelling due to generally having a singular focus. I revisited my conversation with Amelia for her perception of how the faculty and ad hoc committees accomplish their goals. She starts by discussing how charges for standing committees can go unfulfilled due to the academic term ending.

> *"My obligation to this committee is done, and we got nothing done. But the ad hoc committees, usually we need a proposal or recommendation by this time, and you stay focused and get things done." – Amelia, Staff*

Ad hoc committees may provide a path forward for HCL to identify opportunities for change and act quickly.

Finding #2

RQ2: What does the community believe is essential in implementing a change initiative?
The community wants to better understand why new processes and initiatives are occurring and how the changes impact them.

Every interviewee was asked what is essential to implementing a change initiative and what would cause an initiative to be unsuccessful. Each participant provided their top two factors, represented in the following chart. In a study where Kotter's change model was used to replace a teaching evaluation system, Wentworth et al. (2018) attribute the initiative's success to having a faculty-led guiding team and generating faculty buy-in. Based on prior conversations, it was anticipated that faculty buy-in would be among the top responses. However, an unexpected

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trend developed. Not only was faculty buy-in one of the least mentioned factors, but sensegiving was the most frequent response.

No participant explicitly said the term 'sensegiving,' but the idea was felt in their desires for understanding and their needing to know the 'why' as it pertains to new processes and initiatives. Even the second-most noted factor speaks to the need for sensegiving. That factor was "Right People" in the figure and comes from participants stating that HCL must ensure the right people have a seat at the table when decisions were being made. This speaks to sensegiving because the law school had not done a good enough job of informing stakeholders of who was involved in a particular decision and why they were there.
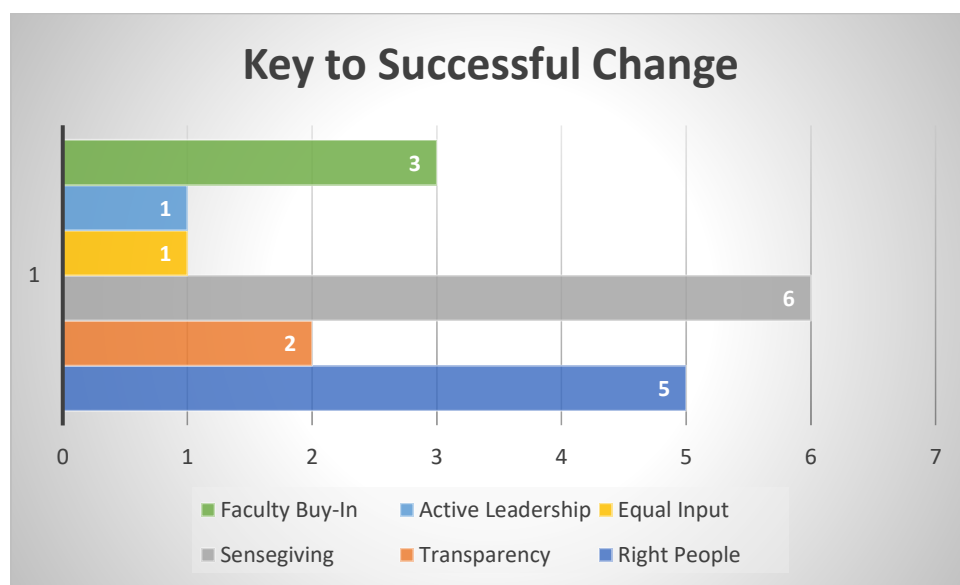
Figure 8. Stakeholders change priorities.

When attempting to implement a strategic change, the organization must change the community's current ways of thinking and activities for the organization to take advantage of opportunities (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The community must be able to comprehend any departures from the existing way of doing business for the intended change to occur. Gioia and Chittipeddi note that leaders need "to articulate and advocate his or her vision or preferred interpretive scheme for the stakeholders" (p. 434). Their work is the foundation that Foldy et al.

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(2008) build upon in their study of sensegiving. The authors discuss the role of framing to aid in creating understanding and decision-making while appropriately representing one's perspective (Foldy et al., 2008). They note that framing is needed to foster an understanding of the vision and generate buy-in, notions that Anne spoke about in her interview.

> *"I think being able to hear about or see or understand the impact. I'll take the university example of a post-COVID return to work policies. It's one thing to say, we're requiring everybody to be on campus three days a week, or two days a week, or whatever it is because the university said we had to. I think it would be more positively received if it was 'we're doing this because we really want to build community amongst our employees, and it helps our students to be able to meet face to face because XYZ.'" – Anne, Staff.*

Michael expressed a similar sentiment:

> *"I think ineffective communication of the policy and the rationale for the policy always undercuts. If you don't have that, then it presents a challenge." – Michael, Faculty Chair.*

Helping stakeholders make sense of proposed changes involves effective communication. Much of the preliminary discussions with stakeholders presented a narrative of division between faculty and staff; the survey sections on the organization's climate and readiness to change proved to be a source of commonality. As evidenced in Figure nine, faculty (73.7%) and staff (81.6%) overwhelmingly disagree with the statement, "Changes are always discussed with everyone concerned." This prompt speaks to Kotter's second step to implementing change, *forming a powerful guiding coalition*. Not involving those most impacted by a change in the process makes it impossible for everyone to "come together and develop a shared commitment" (Kotter, 1995, p. 62).
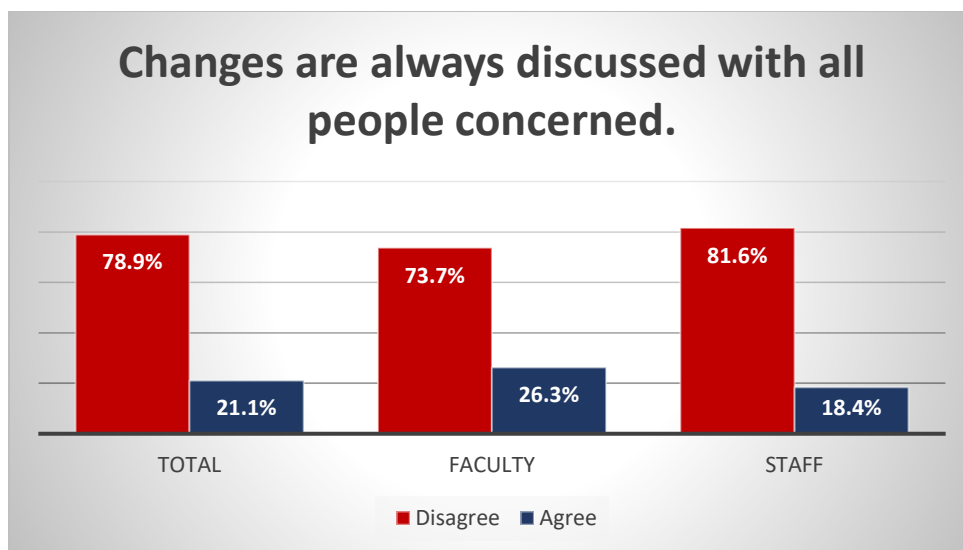
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Figure 9. Inclusive leadership.

Other facets of communication were examined when exploring the current change climate. Figure 6 shows how faculty and staff responded to prompts in this area. These percentages represented how vehemently they disagreed with a statement. Regarding the prompt "changes are always discussed with all people concerned," both parties felt strongly that these conversations were not taking place with the right people. This sentiment was also shared in the interviews, especially with the staff. Both faculty and staff are similar in their feelings about leadership's history of keeping faculty, and staff informed about decisions. The most significant gap in this area stemmed from faculty almost unanimously disagreeing that communication among leadership, faculty, and staff was excellent.

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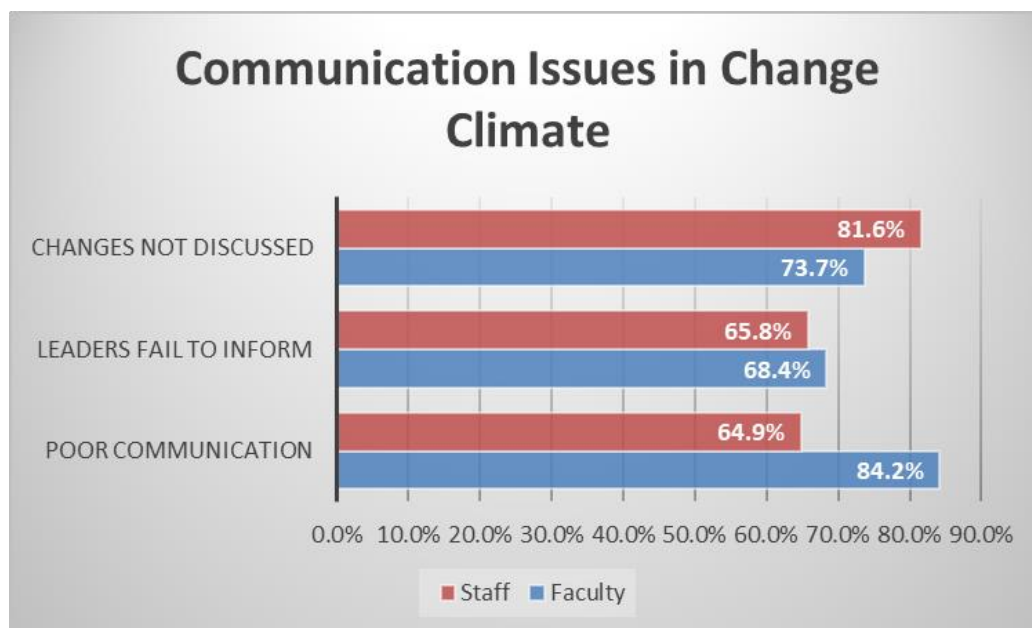
Figure 10. Communication issues.

Finding #3

> RQ3: What is the current focus for stakeholders in managing change?
>
> Despite their involvement, stakeholders perceive their impact/influence in a process to be minimal due to the involvement of other stakeholders.

Through this process, I have observed how several stakeholders view issues at HCL. During a 2022 staff gathering, the topics of process improvement and student satisfaction were raised. According to the corresponding small group reports, the blame lies with the student expectations, faculty governance, and the acquisition. A similar gathering was held for the faculty, and the fault was placed on a lack of academic freedom, student preparedness, and the acquisition. Not one employee pointed the finger at themselves.

When surveyed about readiness for change, respondents had an incredibly high opinion of their personal abilities. ~84% of respondents stated that they are willing to make a significant contribution to change initiatives, and 73.2% of respondents experience change as a positive process of the organization. Combine these responses with the fact that 67.9% of respondents

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declared that they want to "devote myself to the process of change at the law school" and it appears that the organization has the buy-in to make effective changes. Yet, those same respondents devastatingly (75%) feel that plans for future improvement will not amount to much.

A facet of this lack of faith in future improvements stems from how stakeholders feel about their colleagues. A standing committee relies on the efforts of the collected talents of the stakeholders to address issues. When perceptions of those around you erode, the performance of the committee will suffer (Kim, 2003). Kim's 2003 study of how colleague perceptions influenced group dynamics delves into the ways someone's past interactions with a coworker will create biases for future work. In the chart below, 58.9% of stakeholders have confidence in their colleagues. While mostly positive, this is a problematic statistic for HCL. Essentially, two out of every five employees did not believe in their colleagues' abilities to do their jobs and support the system. This is proven in the same chart, where 66.1% of the stakeholders stated that their colleagues have trouble adapting to changes. These would have been the same colleagues, who mostly believed that they were ready to embrace and facilitate change, according to the survey.
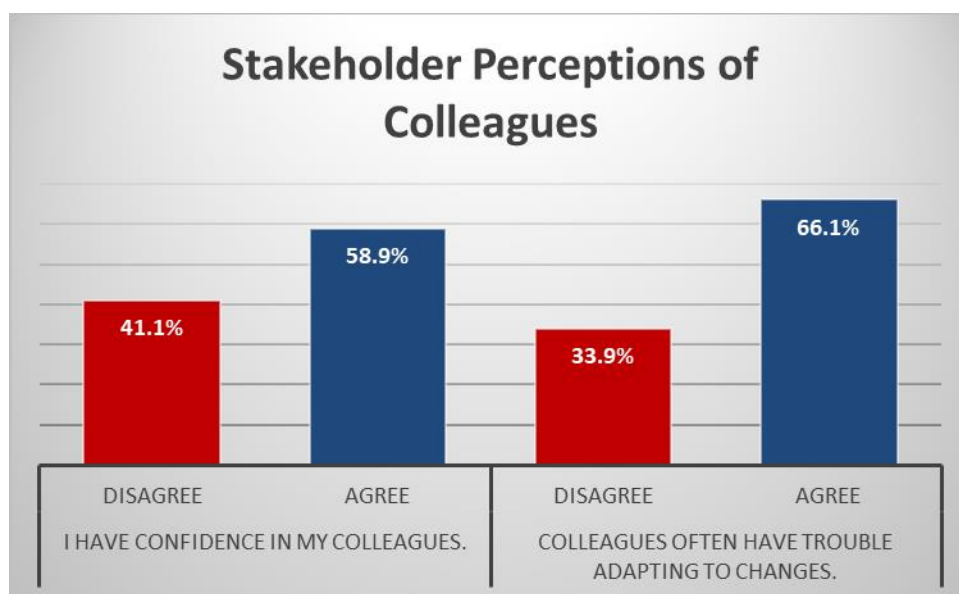

Figure 11. Perceptions of Colleagues

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In law school settings, the Dean occupies the same level of authority as a President or Chancellor at a college or university. Dean Hughes has this distinction for HCL and is charged with providing leadership to all aspects of the organization. How those in the organization view leadership is not always based on science or theory, but on the narratives that their actions produce. Leaders must be bold, charismatic, and have an unwavering conviction to carry them to the end (personal communication, Quinn Trank, 2020). The role of leadership has been discussed in the earlier findings and will be expanded upon here. When the data was collected, Dean Hughes had been with the law school for less than a year. It makes sense that many of the survey responses related to leadership were based on experiences before her arrival. Faculty, staff, and student interviewees all focused on the Dean's role in improving the current change climate.

Past studies have clarified leaders' influence on employee behaviors through social exchange processes portrayed by social exchange theory. Social exchange theory suggests that a group who believes they are receiving favorable treatment will attempt to return that treatment in an equal manner (Hanh Tran & Choi, 2019). This theory offers an essential theoretical lens on a leader's behavior and its influence on followers' desired outcomes, such as not considering how a change impacts the workforce. When changes adversely affect employees, and it is perceived that leadership does not care, those tasked with executing the changes will have a negative outlook and may not engage with the change in the desired way. Hanh Tran and Choi's study found that inclusive leadership stimulated psychological safety; this, in turn, improved employee involvement. Samantha alluded to leadership needing to be more intentional in working with stakeholders, especially staff, due to a lack of psychological safety.

> *"It goes back to leadership and whether or not leadership has an inclusive approach to wanting to solicit feedback from various individuals or stakeholders that may contribute in a way that other people may not even expect or think about." – Samantha, Non-Committee Staff.*

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The fifth step of Kotter's 8-step change model involves empowering others to act. Kotter discusses how employees want to engage in the change process, but obstacles get in the way (1995). Obstacles can come in several forms, including communication barriers for those without access. Empowerment may come in the form of soliciting stakeholder input, as Samantha's quote mentions, or advocating for those with less of a voice. Below is the comprehensive survey response to a statement about leaders advocating for employees.

		Total	Faculty	Staff
Our leaders speak up for us during the change process.	Disagree	61.4%	68.4%	57.9%
	Agree	38.6%	31.6%	42.1%

Most respondents felt that leaders are not raising concerns in instances where a change initiative may negatively affect their staff. Though both groups mostly disagreed with the statement, faculty believe there is an apparent lack of support from leadership. Mia spoke about the faculty's desire for a leader to advocate for them:

> *"Everybody wants to set their dreams and their hopes on that new leader. Ultimately, people are going to realize that that person can't deliver all of their hopes and dreams, and then it can turn right into this very ugly situation." – Mia, Faculty Chair.*

The "ugly situation" is the adverse outcome that stems from a lack of supportive leadership. Khalid et al. (2012) build on the foundational work of House and Mitchell by noting the importance of supportive leadership in the connection between job stress and performance. Effective leaders find the right balance between the system and employee well-being. When Argyris and Schön (1978) found that people will avoid change by piling subterfuge on camouflage, that is a result of the pressure being unmanageable for stakeholders.

Though this project focused on the faculty and staff stakeholder groups, the students have expressed what they are focused on change initiatives. The students were looking for transparency, primarily with leadership. Recent student surveys have illuminated the

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population's desire to be made aware of what transpires across the law school. Salvatico (2006) referenced a scenario in their study of transparent leadership in the hospitality industry where a group of housekeepers were aware of inappropriate behavior by a supervisor but feared retaliation and decided to remain in an atmosphere of fear and favoritism. Once the issue was brought to light, it was incumbent on leadership to keep the staff aware of what happened, and what was being done about it, and to ensure that the company had their best interests at the core of everything.

This scenario is not uncommon for students in higher education. They may find themselves in situations where they have been made aware of misconduct or have experienced some form of injustice themselves. Due to the education system's power dynamics and transactional nature, students often cite fear of retaliation as a reason for not speaking up. Despite this fear, students still want to be informed about what is taking place on their campus.

> *"Within a big institution like law school, you're going to have people who have different views of how things should go. But I think with change, it's really important to be clear about where we're going, and what is the goal, what are we heading towards, and trying to get as many people on board as possible." – Jan, Student Representative.*

Jan expresses the importance of transparent leadership for students and how students may be more apt to buy into changes when HCL is more forthcoming with information. Earlier, I referenced an issue where HCL did not create a sense of urgency around an issue with an exam, and how that compared to the response to George Floyd. This is an example where the word had spread, and the news became such that most community members were aware of the incident, but the law school has still not discussed it with all stakeholders or notified the students of the final outcome. When the students state their focus is on transparent leadership, they are looking for leadership to create awareness around the implemented changes and the outcomes from that process, especially for students.

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Summary of Findings

- The climate survey provided empirical data that revealed how severe perceptions of organizational injustice are at HCL (Finding #1).
  - Faculty respondents have a prodigiously negative view of the various dimensions of organizational justice. Staff responses, specifically with procedural and contributive justice, did not always align with interview findings from that population. This is an issue because research shows that there is a link between perceptions of justice and successful change initiatives.
- Part of the problem, as stated in the semi-structured interviews, is due to stakeholders not effectively understanding why changes are taking place (Finding #2).
  - Stakeholders are unable to buy into proposed changes when they do not understand why the change is needed, what the change will entail, and how it impacts them within the organization.
- Finally, stakeholders look outward when looking for barriers to change rather than inward (Finding #3).
  - Stakeholders have a favorable view of their own abilities to change but have less faith in their colleagues. All three groups are focused on how leadership affects their role in the change management process.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings and the basis of this project, I have three primary recommendations for Dean Hughes and HCL that will facilitate more effective and fair change initiatives.

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Recommendation #1: HCL should be more agile in its approach to addressing high-impact change initiatives.

As this project illustrates, the existing standing committees at HCL do not instill strong perceptions of organizational justice. These perceptions are based on stakeholder experiences with leadership and how standing committees are structured. Peus et al. (2009) inform of significant contributors to successful organizational change initiatives, including the need for consensus among the team being vital in reducing resistance to change. Consensus, in this instance, is not referring to the outcome, but the understanding of what is to be done and the process to accomplish the goal.

"Competent and strong group of executives is the ideal driving force behind the implementation of change" (Peus et al., 2009, p. 169). Ad hoc committees are formed by Dean Hughes to address very specific and immediate issues. The group's composition varies, with there being instances of more staff members than faculty, and the chair is assigned on the merit of their expertise in that area.

> *"It is just very clear what we're being asked to do. We can break it down into subcommittees, we can break it out into steps, and we can actually work towards change there." – Anne, Staff.*

The situation that Anne describes is the work of an ad hoc committee for HCL. Every member of the team is considered an equal voting member, leading to increased engagement from the stakeholders. Kotter lists the traits of successful coalitions for change featuring those with the proper level of expertise, strong reputations, and being great relationship builders (1995). It is in his second step, forming a powerful coalition, that the rationale for using more ad hoc committees can be found.

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According to Kotter, the guiding coalition will include senior staff and faculty at the group's center. Still, it should pull from various facets of the community to ensure representativeness and compelling conversation. Due to this configuration, the committee "tends to operate outside of the normal hierarchy by definition. This can be awkward, but it is clearly necessary" (Kotter, 1995, p. 62). By including different perspectives, there is an increased likelihood of buy-in from other stakeholders. This is due to increased perceptions of procedural and contributive justice that exist with the ad hoc committees. Using ad hoc committees allows HCL to efficiently work on the problem and produce results that community members are more apt to support the initiative.

Recommendation #2: HCL should alter the structure of standing committees to increase equity in decision-making.

"Managers who spent too little time building networks had much more difficulty getting things done" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 193). Bolman and Deal are speaking to the political frame and the importance of involving all those who influence the organization's success in the process. The data and findings illustrate that staff do not feel that their expertise and contributions have been valued in the past. It has already been noted that operating outside of the standard hierarchy is necessary, as the hierarchy represents an obstacle to the new vision.

Law schools are governed by the American Bar Association, which publishes regulations that must be met for an institution to be in good standing. Standard 404, article a, subsection four focuses on the responsibilities of full-time faculty. They note that faculty service to the law school and university community includes governance of the law school (American Bar Association [ABA], 2022). While the American Bar Association requires faculty to participate in making decisions, they do not dictate the process. HCL should restructure standing committees

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to provide staff members with votes and an equal say, including staff chairs for non-academic focuses.

There are existing standing committees (Admissions and Financial Aid Committee & Student Engagement) that personify the previously discussed work of Ericson (see p.17). Part of that discussion dealt with the strategic error organizations make by not actively including those who will implement the vision in the planning process. Consider the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee, where the then-recently hired Director of Financial Aid had to be informed of the committee's existence more than three months after joining the organization. Part of that committee's charge is to formulate, recommend, and monitor the implementation of policies and standards for financial aid (Appendix D). The respective leaders of those two departments serve as administrative liaisons, yet their careers depend on their abilities to enact the decisions from a committee that does not have to get their input. This committee would be a prime candidate for the approval of a staff chair.

Per Kotter's fifth step, empower others to act, HCL must be willing to take risks and embrace nontraditional ideas. Developing staff committees is a nontraditional idea that empowers the largest segment of the workforce to become more invested in the change process. As such, HCL should create standing committees with a focus on staff. Starting with a staff engagement and staff recruitment committee provides balance, as faculty versions of these committees exist. Due to the high turnover rate in recent years, staff engagement and recruitment are areas of improvement for the institution. Doing so reinvigorates the process with new projects and change agents, an integral part of step seven.

Recommendation #3: HCL shoud improve organizational justice perceptions and trust through intentional sensegiving.

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Though this study's findings may be unsurprising to many stakeholders, they are nevertheless unbecoming for Hillman College of Law as a public institution. 60.3% of survey respondents felt that future processes would lack equity; Dean Hughes and the leadership at HLC should leverage this project's findings to engage with stakeholders. The first step in Kotter's guide is to establish a sense of urgency, and the best way to accomplish this is by helping stakeholders understand why a change initiative is needed. Earlier, Fiss and Zajac stressed the significance of symbolic framing to help stakeholders differentiate between what should be and what is (see p.9).

A procedural means of working towards this understanding is to hold semi-annual all-employee meetings and more consistent meetings for staff. To date, the last instance of faculty and staff all coming together to learn of the law school's happenings was a pre-acquisition meeting in 2018. For the 2022-23 academic year, faculty met monthly from August to May; staff met twice during this same time frame. The fourth step in Kotter's guide is communicating the vision using every vehicle possible. While the current norm is to rely on message dissemination from senior staff, faculty leaders, and committee reports, HCL has the ability to facilitate more learning and buy-in by bringing the community together.

During these gatherings, the standing faculty and staff committees can share insights into their work, providing more improved perceptions of procedural and distributive justice. By holding these meetings, HCL creates opportunities for stakeholders to voice their thoughts and contribute to the process. Through this process, not only does the community gain a better understanding of what is occurring, but those leading the charge can learn from the various perspectives and make improvements along the way. This is a fundamental facet of Lave and Wenger's (1991) exploration of the social practice theory of learning. Legitimate peripheral

participation views learning as a phenomenon attained through participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). If HCL's true goal is to ensure that all stakeholders are invested in future change initiatives, then providing opportunities to learn about the change and engage in the process is required.

Conclusion

Historically, HCL has been an institution of opportunity and access, with a reputation as the "practice ready" law school, an institution where one would exit as a legal professional who can thrive in any legal environment. As of this writing, the law school has graduated more sitting judges in their state than any other law school in the area. HCL is not considered an elite organization with unlimited resources, and achieving these accomplishments requires stakeholder investment in the school's vision for effective execution. As the years passed and the world around HCL continued to change, the law school was unsuccessful in changing with it. The lack of progress led to employee and student turnover and numerous missed opportunities.

This project examined barriers and facilitators of change in higher education by focusing on the standing committees at HCL, more commonly referred to as faculty committees by faculty and staff. An organizational justice lens was employed to study how perceptions of fairness influenced change initiatives. The project found that faculty, staff, and students have a negative perception of organizational justice which impacts their ability to buy into changes and leads to varying degrees of resistance. There is also a general lack of understanding amongst faculty and staff, where they believe that leadership has failed to adequately communicate various facets of changes with them. Though each stakeholder group is focused on a different leadership aspect, each is concerned with how the Dean will manage future processes.

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Appendix A: Quantitative Survey

Employee Climate Survey
Clarence Glenn and the Office of the Dean are sending this survey. The data in this survey will be protected as responses are anonymous. The data of this survey will be shared with the Dean as a tool to facilitate improvement in academic achievement, belonging, and communication. Clarence Glenn may use segments of that data as part of a quality improvement project focused on the law school as part of a program with Vanderbilt University. Compiled results will be shared at future faculty and staff meetings.

Are you an informed and willing participant in this survey?

○ Yes

○ No

What is your primary role at the law school?

○ Faculty

○ Staff

To which gender do you most identify with?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender Male

○ Transgender Female

○ Gender Variant/Non-Conforming

○ Prefer not to say

○ Prefer to self-describe, below

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How long have you worked at the law school?

○ Less than 2 Years

○ 2-5 Years

○ 5-10 Years

○ More than 10 Years

Please indicate your race/ethnicity.

○ White

○ Black or African American

○ Hispanic or Latinx

○ Asian

○ American Indian or Alaska Native

○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

○ Decline to Answer

○ Other

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Your Age

○ 20-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50 +

Educational Achievement

○ Less than a high school diploma

○ High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)

○ Some college, no degree

○ Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)

○ Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)

○ Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)

○ Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, JD)

○ Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

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Please rate the following statements regarding the law school's processes and policies.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The procedures used in my organization have been applied consistently.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures used in my organization are free of bias.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures used in my organization are based on accurate information.	○	○	○	○	○
The procedures used in my organization uphold ethical and moral standards.	○	○	○	○	○

Q1
0

Please rate the following statements based on your experiences working on assignments with colleagues.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I can express my views and feelings about my organization's procedures.	○	○	○	○	○
I have influence over the assessments made as a result of my organization's procedures.	○	○	○	○	○
I consistently have opportunities to contribute to projects and discussions that are meaningful to the organization.	○	○	○	○	○
Colleagues always treat me with dignity and respect.	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate the following statements based on decisions and outcomes stemming from projects, committees, or various initiatives you were a part of.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The outcomes tend to reflect the effort I have put into the work.	○	○	○	○	○
The outcomes always reflect the contributions and efforts put into the work.	○	○	○	○	○
The outcomes are justified based on my and my colleagues' efforts.	○	○	○	○	○
The outcomes are consistent with what has been done in the past.	○	○	○	○	○

Q1
2

Please rate the following statements based on your current expectations.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Future issues will be addressed appropriately.	○	○	○	○	○
I can express my views and feelings about my organization's future.	○	○	○	○	○
Future processes will be equitable for both faculty and staff.	○	○	○	○	○
I anticipate future decisions will be based on the merits of those assigned to work on the project.	○	○	○	○	○

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Please rate the following statements on the law school's climate.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Communication among leadership, faculty, and staff is excellent.	○	○	○	○	○
I am encouraged to do things that I have never done before.	○	○	○	○	○
Policies are consistent across all functions of the law school.	○	○	○	○	○
I have confidence in my colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership keeps all faculty and staff informed about its decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
Within the law school, politics and power plan an essential role.	○	○	○	○	○
Changes are always discussed with all people concerned.	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate the following statements regarding change factors.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
We are sufficiently informed of the process of change.	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership pays sufficient attention to the personal consequences that changes could have for faculty and staff.	○	○	○	○	○
Our leaders speak up for us during the change process.	○	○	○	○	○
We focus too much on current problems and too little on solutions.	○	○	○	○	○
Colleagues often have trouble adapting to changes.	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate the following statements on readiness for change.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I want to devote myself to the process of change at the law school.	○	○	○	○	○
When available, I am willing to make a significant contribution to the change.	○	○	○	○	○
I think that most changes will have a positive effect on the students we serve.	○	○	○	○	○
I experience change as a positive process.	○	○	○	○	○
Current plans for future improvement will not amount to much.	○	○	○	○	○

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Appendix B: Interviewee Pseudonyms

Chairs	Admin Liaisons	Voting Members	Student Reps	Non-Committee Member
•Mia: Female Faculty •Michael: Male Faculty	•Anne: Female Staff •Amelia: Female Staff	•Dave: Male Faculty •Diane: Female Faculty	•Joyce: Female Student •Jan: Female Student	•Samantha: Female Staff Member

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Appendix C: Codebook

Justice Dimension	Code	Description	Rules	Literature	Evidence
Procedural	*Process Fairness*	The perceived fairness of formal decision-making policies	Consistency, bias suppression, representativeness, correctability, accuracy, and ethicality.	Leventhal 1980; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980	Samantha: "I find that depending on the committee, it might be delayed, deliberated differently, or longer."
Contributive	*Process Control*	The fairness of opportunities to contribute to core work processes in workgroups and organizations	Meaningful work, opportunity, instrumental voice, input into processes, power, transparency	Roberson, 2022, p. 2	Diane: "If the committee emanates from the faculty then the faculty feel empowered by that. The staff may feel [they have] less of a voice, right, especially if they don't have a vote."
Distributive	*Equity in Decisions*	Perceived fairness of organizational decisions and resource allocation	Organizational commitment, trustworthiness, organizational citizenship behaviors, biases	Schminke et al., 2000	Jan: "It appears, from my perspective, that there's kind of a division in the law school on those who liked the change and more in favor of the change and wants to change and then those who are very uncomfortable with it"
Anticipatory	*Anticipation of Distributive Injustice*	The receipt of unfair outcomes, such as undesirable job assignments and added responsibilities	Resistance to change, turnover, employee commitment, confrontations	Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999, p. 52	Dave: "And there was significant resistance on our committee to the idea of being made to teach anything online."

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Appendix D: HCL Standing Committees & Charges

Academic Affairs Committee

General charge: This Committee will have the following duties:

(a)   To recommend standards and policies for dismissal of students for poor scholarship, and to recommend and apply standards and policies for readmission under appropriate circumstances.

(b)   To evaluate faculty grading practices and make recommendations and reports concerning grading.

(c)   To develop, recommend, and apply rules relating to academic standards, degree requirements, standards for honors degrees, and similar matters for all degree and certificate programs.

(d)   To make recommendations for any appropriate changes to the Law School's various bar preparation programs and initiatives, including the mandate program.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:

1.   As needed, working on issues associated with the phase-out of M.J. concentrations and LL.M. degrees.

2.   To review required mandate courses and make recommendations for changes due to NCBE changes to bar exam subject area testing and testing formats.

3.   To review Curves I and II to assess their pedagogical and assessment value, *See* Higher Learning Commission 2015 report.

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee

General charge: This Committee will have the following duties:

(a)   To formulate, recommend, and monitor the implementation of policies and standards for admissions, financial aid, and efforts to attract students who most fully meet the admissions goals of the School.

(b)   To monitor the SCALES Program and any other pre-admission program with academic content, to review the performance of SCALES and any other pre-admission alumni.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:

1.   Helping to recruit and retain the best possible student body. This charge includes participating in activities at Hillman, such as meeting with pre-law students and visiting other colleges to educate advisors and professors about legal education and how students in different colleges and majors might benefit from a legal education. This charge also includes calling and emailing admitted students and participating in Prospective and Admitted Student Open Houses and other events for prospective and admitted students.

2.   Assigning one or more members to participate in at least the first metric-setting meeting with Yellow Arrows for each recruiting term.

3.   Working with the Assistant Dean for Admissions to establish, re-establish, and promote new 3+3 programs.

4.   Reviewing gray files; files for students who have already participated in SCALES; files for transfer students; and files with flagged character-and-fitness issues.

5.   At the Dean's request and together with the Assistant Dean for Admissions:

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a. Monitoring and making recommendations for returning student scholarship awards and, as requested, recommending students to receive outside awards or scholarships; and

b. Assigning one or more members to work with staff from Financial Aid & Admissions on scholarships and scholarship appeals.

Assessment Committee

General charge: This committee will have the following duties:

(a) To help ensure that the Law School meets the program assessment requirements required by the ABA's Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Higher Learning Commission, and HILLMAN.

(b) To regularly review the Law School's assessment plan and help evaluate related data to help the Law School continue improving the program of legal education.

(c) To identify additional aspects of the Law School and its operations that might warrant assessment, to research how comparable assessments are carried out elsewhere, and to make recommendations regarding these matters to the administration.

(d) To facilitate programming on course-level and program-level assessment for faculty and academic staff.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:

1. Developing a multi-year schedule of assessment activities, plans, and reports.
2. Providing support, workshops, and consultation with full-time and adjunct faculty regarding learning outcomes assessment.
3. Coordinating with institutional and programmatic assessment leaders at HILLMAN to complete other charges.
5. Ensuring that all JD Concentrations have published learning outcomes as required by ABA Guidance Memo.

Curriculum Committee

General charge: The Committee will have the following duties:

(a) To evaluate and monitor the curriculum, including distance curriculum, and to recommend changes and improvements.

(b) To formulate and recommend policies respecting continuing legal education programs and community outreach programs.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:

1. Developing a process and timeline to conduct a comprehensive curriculum review (with the exception of mandate courses, which the Academic Affairs Committee is reviewing). The review should include review of the ABA/NCBE standards, evaluating the knowledge, skills, and values our graduates may need, both as graduates of a Carnegie Research 1 university and to perform in a dynamic legal environment.
2. With the DEI Committee, working on finalizing proposals related to satisfying revised ABA Standard 303 (b) and (c) requirements that the Law School (1) provide substantial opportunities for development of a professional identity; and (2) provide education at the

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start of students' program of legal education and at least once again before graduation on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism.
3.   Working on curricular issues in connection with joint-degree and interdisciplinary certificates as they are raised.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Law School Campus Climate Committee

General charge: This Committee will develop, recommend, and monitor policies and programs regarding Law School diversity and inclusion, and will oversee and review periodic assessments of Law School climate. Upon request from the Executive Committee or Dean, this Committee will convene colloquia on improving the Law School climate and student experiences, including with respect to diversity and inclusion.
The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:
1.   In consultation with the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and other members of the Administration, assisting with tracking, evaluating, and implementing proposals and recommendations arising from campus conversations and forums.
2.   Identifying existing programs and developing new programs to satisfy revised ABA Standard 303 (b) and (c) requirements that the Law School (1) provide substantial opportunities for development of a professional identity; and (2) provide education at the start of students' program of legal education and at least once again before graduation on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism. After programs have been identified and initially developed, work together with the Curriculum Committee to finalize a joint proposal to the faculty assembly.
3.   Working with the administrative liaisons and the Assistant Dean of Admissions to generate ideas and recommendations to improve the recruitment, admission, and retention of a diverse student body.
4.   Working with the administrative liaisons and Associate Dean for Professionalism & Career Strategy to study job placement by race and gender. Identify challenges and make recommendations to address issues found.
5.   Working with the administrative liaisons to implement robust programming relating to diversity, inclusion, and a healthy campus climate.

Executive Committee

General Charge: The responsibilities of the Executive Committee are outlined in Article III of the Assembly Bylaws.

Faculty Engagement Committee

General charge: The Committee has the following duties:
   (a)   To provide suitable orientation for new members of the full-time and adjunct Faculty. Such new members are to be fully apprised of the policies of the School, of its examination and grading policies, of its history, and in general of all information that will fully integrate them into the Faculty. Appropriate means of introduction to other members of the Faculty are to be developed and applied.

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(b)   To recommend programs and policies that promote the professional development of the Faculty, including teaching effectiveness, such as Faculty exchanges, seminars, sabbaticals, etc.

(c)   To develop appropriate standards, in conjunction with the Dean, for Faculty support services, including administrative assistance, word processing, telephone service, and paid student assistants.

(d)   To recommend programs and policies dealing with, and suggestions for implementation of, other matters of Faculty concern, such as working conditions, conducive teaching environment, scheduling, class loads, administrative responsibilities, interim and summer teaching, and supervision of programs, divisions, centers, institutes, conferences, and other projects.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:

1.   Identifying and securing speakers for the 2022–2023 Scholarship Roundtable Speaker Series.

2.   Planning and implementing one or more Teaching Effectiveness Programs.

3.   Reviewing current NTT Clinical faculty standards for faculty whose primary function is teaching to consider replacing "Clinical" modifier with "Teaching" modifier and to consider adding ranks Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, and Teaching Professor, in conformity with the recent amendment to University Statutes and if necessary modifying College P&T norms and criteria as well as other policies and to complete this task by the end of the 2022-2023 academic year. Doing the same for adjunct faculty.

Faculty Recruitment Committee

General charge:

1.   To meet with the Dean soon after appointment of the Committee to discuss hiring priorities for the coming year.

2.   To recruit, interview, review, and host Faculty candidates, other than Law Library Instructors, including attending any Faculty recruitment conference the Dean identifies as important to Faculty recruitment.

3.   To hold meetings of appropriate Faculty groups to evaluate and recommend Faculty candidates to the Dean.

Honor Council

General charge: The Honor Council is a five-person committee (three faculty members and two students, and alternates) that conducts hearings to determine potential violations and recommend remedial and other measures under the Law School Honor and Professionalism Code.

Library & Information Services Committee

General charge: This Committee is responsible for evaluating the educational aspects of the library and making appropriate reports and recommendations. This Committee is also responsible for evaluating educational aspects of the Law School's policies regarding distance

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education, computers, the internet, and related technologies and software, and making appropriate reports and recommendations.

The Committee's specific charges for 2022–2023 include:
1. Assess the print subscription acquisition process in support of the Law School curriculum and faculty scholarship and determine budgetary implications.
2. Review the Interim Policy on Class Recordings, which the faculty voted to extend with an amendment at its May assembly meeting through fall 2022.

Student Engagement Committee

General charge: This Committee has the following duties:

(a) To recommend policies for orientation programs for entering students, and such additional programs of orientation or guidance as may seem desirable.

(b) To recommend policies to assist in promoting placement and career development activities for students.

(c) To provide input to the administration regarding student organizations, including the Honors Programs.

(d) To develop and monitor the performance of academic and professional advising programs.

(e) To recommend programs and policies to promote positive student-faculty relations.

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