



Striving 2.0: Faculty Collaboration and Advocacy as Strategies for Overcoming Post-Striving Organizational Priorities

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Accepted: 22 February 2022 / Published online: 1 April 2022
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Abstract

A case study at a large, public research university was conducted to understand how post-striving environments, defined by those universities that achieved very high research activity classification, influence campus structures and practices related to faculty and organizational approaches to pedagogy, teaching, and learning. Participants explained how organizational structures, practices, and relationships affected the process of seeking to achieve very high research activity and the impact on institutional commitments to teaching and learning. Findings indicate that striving produced an unexpected early change in Carnegie designation and created organizational tensions. Outcomes expected from the literature, such as faculty divides and inequities, contrast with new but complicated opportunities as a result of the increased research activities. Faculty had to rely on relationship building and use of mission-focused and data-driven advocacy efforts to enact pedagogy change on their campuses. A major contribution of this study is an understanding of how faculty and other teaching advocates, who are focused on non-striving priorities like innovative teaching practices, employ strategies to overcome research focused striving structures and practices.

Keywords Institutional striving · Pedagogical change · Institutional collaboration

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Higher education organizations have often sought a level of prestige to better position themselves in the market by making themselves attractive to potential students, parents, funders, and business partners (Toma, 2012). Numerous studies investigated the influence of striving, or “the pursuit of prestige within the academic hierarchy” (O’Meara, 2007, p. 122) on faculty work, specifically on the connection between striving and faculty agency, social capital, and socialization (Gonzales, 2014, 2015; Gonzales et al., 2014; O’Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011). Common to these studies is an understanding that when higher education institutions are striving, faculty work is redirected toward research and institutional outcomes and away from teaching.

While these studies explain the shift in focus of faculty work priorities within striving universities, they do not explain how the process of that work changes once a university reaches a new level of prestige and continues to strive forward. The purpose of this study is to understand how the post-striving period influences campus structures and practices, adding to and extending extant literature. Specifically, we have focused on understanding how the process of faculty work related to teaching and learning, which is typically not viewed institutionally as a striving priority at large, public institutions, changes when organizations move from a perceived lower-status position to a more prestigious position. As such, our research questions were:

1. How have processes associated with non-striving priorities (priorities not related to striving for higher research activity, specifically teaching and learning) changed for faculty and other teaching advocates during the post-striving period?
2. What impact have these changes had on faculty work and organizational effectiveness?
3. What strategies have faculty used to adapt, resist, or reform these processes?

We use elements of institutional striving (O’Meara, 2007) and organizational collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009) and their influence on faculty pedagogical change as our theoretical framework to answer these questions. The importance of this work is in providing an understanding of how, even after an institution has striven and reached a new level of perceived prestige, post-striving processes and practices continue to influence faculty work.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Faculty work related to non-striving activities, like centering the teaching and learning process, is influenced by the environment in which work occurs, relationships, and collaborations. The conceptual framework for this study employs literature on institutional striving, organizational collaboration, and pedagogical change. Use of these three literature bases help to construct a conceptual model that centers faculty and other teaching advocates’ work within collaborative organizational change systems and striving environments (see Fig. 1, below).

For this study, we use several expressions when referring to faculty types. We use *term faculty* to describe full-time faculty who have teaching contracts with

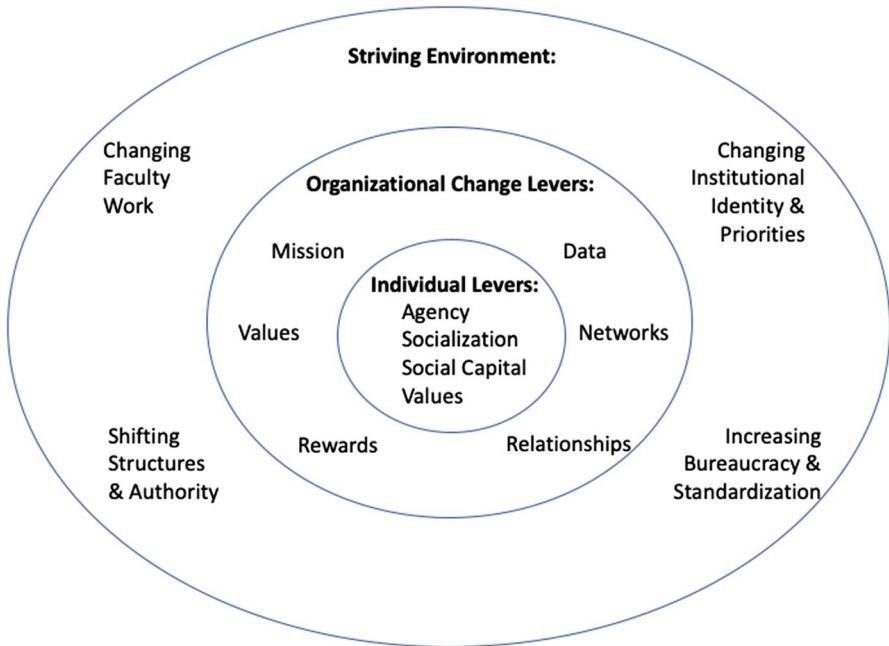


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework for understanding post-striving faculty work processes at higher education institutions

specific lengths that are periodically renegotiated. *Tenured* and *tenure-line* faculty are used to describe those faculty who are pursuing or have been granted permanent employment. *Adjunct faculty* refer to those employed by the institution part-time and are primarily expected to teach introductory courses. We use *teaching* faculty and *research* faculty when describing the focus of a particular faculty member.

Institutional Striving

Changing funding and accountability standards have acted as a catalyst for striving by postsecondary institutions (O’Meara, 2007; Rosinger et al., 2016; Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). As institutions strive to improve their standing in the academic marketplace, their institutional priorities begin to shift. To stay competitive for various external funding opportunities and reap the benefits of the associated prestige from the R1¹ classification, defined as very high research (Bloomgarden, 2007; Ehrenberg, 2003; Winston, 2000), striving institutions often begin to prioritize research over teaching and learning (Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Morphew, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003). Aldersley (1995) connected the emphasis of improving graduate education, and ultimately research support, to institutions

¹ Although the Carnegie Classification system defines the designation R1 as ‘very high research’ we refer to the designation as R1, using the language our participants used.

striving to raise their Carnegie classification. Similarly, Massy and Zemsky (1994) investigated the pivot away from undergraduate education in favor of developing graduate education and research to attract more prestigious students, who could support faculty research endeavors. A benefit of striving institutions placing emphasis on research is the increased number of prestigious graduate students that can work well with faculty (Hagedorn, 2000).

Institutional reorienting around research priorities provides a platform for faculty to be rewarded for their research efforts while drastically minimizing or discontinuing incentives for their teaching and learning efforts (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011). Yet even as rewards and incentives change, faculty at striving institutions are simultaneously expected to maintain high research involvement, innovate in teaching and learning, and meet service requirements (Clark, 1987; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003). Faculty at striving institutions are often expected to ramp up their research involvement by lowering their teaching loads (Massy & Zemsky, 1994). Finnegan and Gamson (1996) found that promotions and tenure-track positions were used as incentives for faculty buy-in to more rigorous research.

Possible consequences of shifting priorities and subsequent demands can be negative, such as faculty research roles being in conflict with attempts to fulfill service requirements, creating another barrier to career advancement (Bloomgarden & O'Meara, 2007). Given that faculty are key stakeholders in striving institutions wishing to leverage research for prestige and higher Carnegie classifications, it is important to investigate their unique perceptions of how different incentives and levels of responsibility affect them (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011).

Organizational Collaboration

As with striving and the movement toward research-intensive activities, the postsecondary environment is becoming increasingly dependent upon winnowed funding and resources. Academic work is reliant on cross-unit collaboration within organizations (Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Kezar and Lester (2009) offer a model for organizational collaboration that notes the influence of external pressures such as Striving U's competitors; the importance of organizational mission, networks, values, and rewards in effective academic work and change, like improving teaching and learning. This model provides a basis from which we view the process of change that has occurred in post-striving institutions and establishes a framework for understanding the processes that faculty and other teaching advocates have leveraged in post-striving environments. Organizational collaboration and work are also dependent upon collaborative individuals who are able to work across organizational differences (Klein, 2017; Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Author (2017) found individuals are able to more effectively collaborate when they tie work to mission, goals, and culture; they actively build their social capital, cultivate professional relationships, and advocate for colleagues.

Individual & Pedagogical Change

Pedagogical change, like collaboration, is multi-layered, notoriously difficult, and incredibly dependent upon individual action. Austin (2011) notes that innovative pedagogical change can be leveraged or constrained at individual, department, and institutional levels. In addition to the nested levels of influence and association with aspects of extant literature on striving, pedagogical innovation is also heavily influenced by faculty agency, socialization, and disciplinary, departmental, and institutional norms (Austin, 2011; Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013; Fairweather, 2008). Like organizational change, pedagogical change is also heavily influenced by networks, relationships, and communities of practice (Gehrke & Kezar, 2017; Kezar et al., 2017). For striving institutions where teaching may be deprioritized relative to research interests, individual faculty must work to leverage their departmental cultures and relationships to further teaching-related initiatives.

Beyond the influence of striving on pedagogical change efforts, it is also important to reflect on how the added responsibilities of striving institutions affect faculty work-life balance. Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) found that faculty with families are struggling to balance their responsibilities to their children and to their many roles within their institution (O'Meara & Braskamp, 2005). Faculty are experiencing pressure to handle these roles well and are unsure where to focus their efforts since striving institutions are failing to clearly communicate their expectations (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011; Wendel & Ward, 2005). Faculty who have worked at these striving institutions for an extended period of time and contributed to establishing new programs and teaching initiatives are not offered the same incentives as research-focused faculty since there is a bigger emphasis placed on research efforts (Dubrow et al., 2006). These shifts in rewards for faculty contribute to their struggle to maintain a work-life balance (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005).

Study Methods/Modes of Inquiry

We conducted this instrumental case study at a large, public, R1 university (Striving U) in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. We selected the study site because of Striving U's proximity to a major metropolitan area and its rapid transformation in the last decade. Founded in the 1970s, the institution was, for a long time, a small, commuter campus that serviced mostly in-state and regional students, maintaining a strong tradition in teaching. After receiving national recognition and news coverage for competing successfully in a highly regarded collegiate sports competition in the early 2000's and the subsequent explosive enrollment growth that followed, Striving U has worked to improve its organizational standing. Over the last decade, the university has repeatedly been ranked as an "up and coming school" by *U.S. News and World Report*. In its strategic plans over the past decade, Striving U highlighted their goals and accomplishments in moving from *high* to *very high research* classification through the Carnegie Classification; working with local and national businesses through applied research partnerships; expanding regional and international campus

locations; shifting from a commuter to a residential campus; developing multiple interdisciplinary research centers; and improving student engagement, retention, and completion metrics. Given Striving U's efforts in this area, we wanted to understand how the university was faring after accomplishing these goals of Striving U as it entered its initial post-striving phase.

The focus on teaching and learning within the striving/post-striving context is tied to a larger National Science Foundation (NSF) Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE) grant funded project. The IUSE project is focused on how course-based communities of transformation (CCTs) can be used to build and facilitate a culture of active learning within and beyond introductory undergraduate STEM courses. Specifically, we were interested in talking to participants who were actively working on non-striving priorities like improving teaching and learning through the use of innovative teaching methods such as active learning strategies.

Participants

After IRB approval, we used purposeful sampling to solicit participants who were involved in implementing active learning strategies in their teaching and work. We identified additional participants through snowball sampling. Seventeen participants took part in this case study from a variety of colleges, roles, and backgrounds. Specific participant demographics are shown in Table 1 below. To protect participants'

Table 1 Demographics, position type, faculty status and department affiliation

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Position/Status	Tenure line/ Term/Adjunct Status	Department
Ann	F	W	Admin Faculty	Tenured	Provost Office
Brittany	F	W	Admin Faculty	Tenured	Provost Office
Carolyn	F	W	Faculty	Adjunct-> Term	Math
Haley	F	W	Admin Staff	N/A	Office of Sponsored Programs
Hassan	M	AsAm	Faculty	Tenured	Engineering
Jeff	M	W	Admin Staff	PhD Candidate	Institutional Research
Joyce	F	W	Faculty	Term	Math
Jane	F	W	Faculty	Tenured	Engineering
Joy	F	W	Faculty	Tenured	Physics
Kathy	F	W	Admin Faculty	Tenured	Provost Office
Lynn	F	W	Faculty	Term	Global and Community and Health
Mary	F	W	Faculty	Tenured	Communication
Rebecca	F	W	Admin Faculty	Occasional Lecturer	Provost Office
Roger	M	W	Admin Staff	Adjunct	School of Business
Roy	M	W	Faculty	Tenured	Math
Sally	F	W	Admin Faculty	Tenured	Teaching Excellence Center
Valerie	F	W	Admin Staff	Instructional Staff	Learning Services

identities, we assigned pseudonyms to them. All participants either actively taught classes, had a history of teaching at the institution, used active learning in their work, or were advocates for innovative teaching and pedagogical reform. Of the 17 participants, 13 were women (76%). The percentage of participants identifying as women is not representative of the percentage of women faculty at Striving U; however, this number is more aligned with the ratio of women participating in the NSF-project on the CCTs. Three of the participants are also leading the NSF IUSE project as PI and CO-PIs.

Data Collection

We collected data via semi-structured interviews from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021. Audio recordings and transcripts for each session were collected via videoconference and notes were also taken. During the interviews we asked the participants questions related to their experiences at Striving U both before and after organizational change, generally, and related to their teaching efforts. Interview questions focused on: 1) the types of organizational changes that participants experienced; 2) how past processes, practices, policies, and structures compare to current ones; 3) which aspects of the institution worked better, remained unchanged, or were worse after organizational change; and 4) how organizational change affected them, professionally and personally. We collected additional data from the CCT meeting observations and NSF IUSE departmental leader reflections, providing multiple sources for triangulation of findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Analysis

We systematically coded transcripts, observations, and memos through open and axial coding recommended for qualitative inquiry (Saldaña, 2015). Using a constant comparative analysis, we developed codes from the literature and from the transcripts. Examples included: social capital, data-driven decision making, mission-focused, authority, bureaucracy, and advocacy. We derived themes from codes, as noted below in the findings. We also use detail to describe our procedures and methods and include “thick description” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in writing the findings.

Trustworthiness and Quality

We triangulated findings through a review of the data by multiple research team members. We ensured validation by engaging in member checking for the participants' interview or observation. All data collected were used in developing this paper, which addresses rival explanations for the phenomena that are seen (Yin, 2009).

Limitations

Despite the strengths of the research design, this study has several limitations. The study's findings are based on cross-sectional data described by a small number of faculty and staff from a single institution who volunteered to take part in interviews, meeting observations, and write reflection memos. Findings from this study are therefore not generalizable to faculty or all post-striving institutions. Despite efforts to diversify the sample pool, the participant sample is not racially or ethnically diverse and reflects the overall lack of diversity in faculty and administrators at Striving U. A concerted effort was made to include participants from a variety of roles, disciplines, areas of the institution, varied levels of experience and time working at Striving U.

Findings

Findings indicate that striving at Striving U has resulted in organizational prioritization of research-related efforts that aligns with typical prestige-seeking strategies to increase the stature of the institution, including the improvement and allocation of associated infrastructure and resources toward research and away from teaching. While Striving U has engaged in active learning and pedagogy efforts to improve teaching and learning, including the construction of new active learning classrooms, these efforts are often hampered by the primacy of research, availability of resources, and increasing bureaucracy related to faculty work. This creates a climate in which faculty and administrators seeking to improve teaching and learning are often constrained by overarching administrative structures that prize research-related striving priorities, rapid change in administrative processes, and authority that limits pedagogical function and innovation. Yet in this context, the need for teaching faculty and advocates to innovate to support teaching work has also led to new opportunities. To effectively implement non-striving, non-prioritized efforts, like active learning, participants leveraged relationship and advocacy efforts following the Kezar and Lester (2009) model for organizational collaboration.

Striving Efforts: Unexpected Outcomes and Organizational Tensions

When new leadership in the early 2010s set a strategic goal of becoming a R1 institution and it was awarded two years later, most of the participants in this study noted that they were surprised by the designation. They also felt that the recognition was appropriate given the strides the university had made. For example, Lynn, a term faculty member recalled her and her colleagues' reaction, noting that there was "a lot of 'Wow! How did we get there? How can we maintain it?'" In fact, multiple participants referred to institutional pride as a reaction to this designation because it signified that Striving U had positioned itself to take advantage of the benefits that

come with being an R1 institution, even if it was not altogether prepared for that designation. Rebecca, a member of the Provost Office, noted that:

In ten years there's a lot of things that we're gonna have to put into place and hopefully by 2024, we'll have moved that needle far enough. So, to get it essentially two years later, was something I don't think many of us were actually prepared for.

Striving U recognized that it did not have the appropriate infrastructure in place to support its R1 status, so the institution worked to shift resources toward the hiring of a new Vice President of Research in 2016. This Vice President was tasked with establishing infrastructure, initiatives, and resources to create a path for Striving U to retain its new R1 designation. Although progress has been made on infrastructure, Joy and others noted that research support structures were immature compared to other R1 institutions. Kathy, a senior member in the provost office explains:

We're still not fully there... We're now having to invest in infrastructure that we need in various ways, that I don't think that we had... More mature institutions have more enterprise level systems, and we're getting there. It's just, it's slower for us in that space.

The initial and continuing work on infrastructure is vital for Striving U to maintain its status but has also resulted in organizational tensions.

Post-Striving Faculty Realities: Familiar Stories and New (Complicated) Opportunities

When we asked participants if they saw organizational change as a result of Striving U's new research designation, a majority said there was none – that they had always been moving in this direction. Yet, when asked again, almost every participant referred to the tensions that exist between the overarching organizational goals related to research and the realities that exist for faculty within departments – especially those with teaching priorities. These tensions are tied to increasing bureaucracy that is changing faculty roles and work and the identity of the institution.

Familiar Changes in Faculty Roles and Institutional Priorities

The literature on postsecondary organizational change has documented the ways in which prestige-seeking organizations position faculty work. Changes at Striving U associated with maintaining the R1 classification have followed expected results in this area. As Striving U began to implement processes and structures to gain, support, and sustain its new classification, it also began to shift responsibilities for research and teaching focused faculty.

Multiple participants noted that Striving U has increasingly rewarded research-oriented work. Mary, a tenured faculty member in the Communication

Department, noted that institutional rewards are the focus of both informal and formal departmental communications related to productivity, “It’s all about the number of publications, as long as your teaching evals aren’t too bad...That’s what counts.” These productivity metrics and research priorities are then reinforced by the institution.

Faculty and Institutional Divides Changes associated with Striving U’s R1 designation have worked to divide faculty work along teaching and research lines. Among many participants that noted this division, Joyce, a term faculty member in Math, explained she “anticipate[d Striving U] becoming a place where teaching faculty are more and more split from tenure [research] faculty.” Several participants noted an obvious division regarding pay and other rewards. As Mary shared, “[I] have a colleague [that] is making triple what I am. He’s literally on campus one day a week, he demands a one day a week teaching schedule. He will force other people to trade dates with him.”

Multiple participants noted this has created divisions related to institutional role and identity. This identity crisis has extended to the sorts of incentives and recognition provided to faculty related to teaching. At Striving U, as with many institutions, the administration has not incentivized teaching because the institution itself is not incentivized to do so. The shift is particularly noticed at Striving U because of its history as a teaching institution. Jane, a tenured Engineering faculty member, says:

I would love to be in a place where the university said we are really interested in having the best learning outcomes for our students at all levels that we could possibly have, and that’s where we’re going to focus our energies. But incentives don’t, outside incentives to the institution don’t lead to that.

Research-related striving can also impact how teaching-heavy departments and teaching-focused faculty feel valued. Faculty in the Math Department at Striving U, who, like Communication, are largely viewed as a service-oriented department because they provide general education support for a number of disciplines, argued that their teaching work was often taken for granted and less valued than research-focused work. As Carolyn, a term faculty member in Striving U’s Math department explains:

Yes, I definitely think that if the department as a whole has increased research activity, then it makes us more valuable to the university. I think in the past we’ve been a service department, and they’re like, “Oh, that’s great.” But you know, we don’t get any benefit for that. So like we sit here with huge enrollments this semester, and you know, no one cares.

Further, the uneven expectations related to service, in particular, weighs more heavily on younger faculty, women, faculty of color, adjunct, and term faculty at Striving U and is of concern to those who advocate for equity and the importance of teaching at the institution. Younger and lower

rank faculty are often tasked with or take on more teaching and service-oriented activities at Striving U, creating unreasonable burdens on their time. As Brittany, a senior member of the provost office focused on undergraduate education explains:

There's a status difference in being a higher productivity researcher than being a very good teacher, so that concerns me. I also feel like there's a gender imbalance in this that's tied to that status of research. In a lot of units, the contingent faculty are more likely to be female, or those that are not considered research-heavy take on more of the service responsibilities... So I think that gender, and class, and status, and assignment are all connected...we need to make sure that it's an active choice every day to connect [research and teaching] to one another and to value them the same way.

This desire to create equitable value across teaching and research is one that was promoted by nearly all participants. Although teaching advocates at Striving U are actively considering this equity issue, teaching and service are still not rewarded equitably and are disproportionately delivered by women and faculty of color at Striving U.

Resource Constraints Influence Action The frustration of being devalued while still maintaining a high workload and bringing in substantial enrollment is evident, especially as these service departments often receive fewer resources than their research-oriented departmental counterparts.

In fact, because of a newly adopted incentives-based budget model, resources are allocated to Deans offices, who often prioritize research faculty and departments over teaching. Departmental resources for teaching is also an issue, as Roy goes on to explain, for example:

We have the ambitions, and I think we're lined up with where the administration would like us to be, but I don't think we're going to be hitting massive home runs, because we've never been given resources to even look like [a more competitive research institution].

Policies and practices that do not include departments in decision making limit the agility for resources and support to be leveraged for teaching priorities.

The budget model, coupled with a Vice President of Research who reports to the President and not the Provost, has further compounded the resource inequities in departments by creating a gap in resources and funding for Striving U's teaching excellence center. Sally, a member of the teaching excellence center's staff explains that the decentralized budget and shift in research reporting lines means that, "from a teaching and learning perspective, that has perhaps left an unintended effect of creating a little bit of a hole at the [teaching excellence] center" because the grants and tuition dollars that might have gone to the Provost's office in the past are now funneled to individual colleges. The result is reduced institutional support for teaching and learning efforts, which puts a greater burden on individual departments and faculty.

New (Complicated) Opportunities

Alongside the division and inequities that exist at Striving U, there is an emergence of new opportunities and structures that work to support and prioritize teaching. Arguably, these opportunities are tied to the organizational culture – one that prizes innovation² and is committed to teaching excellence.

New resources and roles Departments have taken advantage of this latitude, especially those like Communication and Math, which place a heavy emphasis on teaching and prioritize that work alongside research. For example, Joyce explains how in the Math department:

The stuff that has primarily impacted teaching in a really good way was that a few years ago [a colleague] initiated a fee on 100 and 200 level courses, which has opened up an entire fund of money to support undergraduate initiatives and to support professional development for term faculty around teaching.

The focus on research has pushed teaching faculty to create innovative practices and ideas to increase resources for their initiatives. Another example from the Math department is that for the first time a term faculty member has become an Associate Department Chair in control of course scheduling and another term faculty member is in charge of undergraduate course coordination. Joyce explains:

I am now the Associate Chair, which historically has been filled by a tenure-line faculty member. I am the person who thought that a term faculty member should...do a lot of these associate chair roles because it's really kind of like scheduling and relations...and you don't need a PhD in mathematics to do those sorts of things...But I'm also not involved in those sorts of conversations where people are talking about the arc of the department and where they're seeing it go.

The focus on research has allowed structural innovation to take place at the department level at Striving U in this case. This change has given these faculty a level of power and influence in their departments that had previously not existed. However, that power is limited, as these faculty are not and will not ever be eligible for full participation in department decisions or for tenure and its associated protections. Further, these changes are fairly siloed to a specific department.

Tensions Between Teaching and Research in the Classroom Striving U has intentionally equipped new buildings not just with innovative research labs, but also active learning technology classrooms (ALT rooms). However, while these spaces create valuable opportunities for innovative teaching and learning experiences, they have

² Over a decade ago, innovation became, and remains, a central component of Striving U's mission, vision, and tagline, and is still key in naming conventions and initiatives.

also come with increased bureaucracy. Roy, the tenured Math professor, explains his frustration:

I've advocated priority scheduling and intelligent scheduling of limited classroom resources, as a policy change. But no one wants to hear that one. I can't figure out who gets [ALT classrooms], but half the people in there, I think, don't use it the way it was designed...so that's a waste.

Many participants felt that teaching was important and bringing research into the classroom had important implications for learning, which contrasted with the desire to take researchers out of the classroom to be more productive. Ann shared:

[T]he university places a lot of importance and value on teaching as well and understands, at least the deans and other people in leadership understand, that students are going to have the best experience working with faculty that have vibrant research, scholarship, and creative activity programs. Because...they just get this multifaceted, um, understanding of what's happening in the field that they're studying.

Some students are savvy about research rankings, interested in cutting edge research, and want to work with notable researchers. Participants noted that teaching and research also benefit student success outcomes such as pathways to employment, as Roger observed, “[Increased research activity] also enables us to open up new partnerships with business and thus creating new pathways for student employment.”

These statements conflicted with the oft-noted observation about highly productive researchers getting course releases or being protected from teaching to meet research goals. Sally, when discussing hiring new faculty, observed key tactics to attracting research talent, “In a lot of cases that means protecting them from the teaching...in order to find ways to meet their research goals.” Hassan also noted that typical teaching loads at Striving U were higher than a typical R1 institution. Though savvy students follow rankings to work with notable researchers, term faculty often teach undergraduate classes, which could be a barrier between students and research. Mary explains, “The undergraduate curriculum tends to almost be a separate faculty...but most of our [research] faculty teach grad students most of the time.” At Striving U, this means that undergraduates are not able to experience the advantage of exposure to researchers doing cutting edge research in the classroom. If students do not have the cultural capital to seek research opportunities outside the classroom, they may miss out.

Post-Striving Strategies: Leveraging Relationships and Advocating for Change

Faculty and others seeking to improve teaching and learning efforts at Striving U have had to spend more time establishing and cultivating relationships. Teaching faculty also attempt to bring visibility to their efforts by showing how they support

Striving U's mission. Additionally, they use data to advocate for resources and innovations.

Leveraging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Relationships

Striving U, like other higher education organizations, is dependent upon relationships to engender change. Participants noted that they work to establish good relationships within and beyond their departmental boundaries to encourage teaching excellence, innovation, and access to resources and support. Members of the CCT in Striving U's Math department noted the importance of relationships in pedagogical change. Their CCT, made up of tenure line, term, and adjunct faculty, and graduate students began to incorporate purposeful relationship building within and beyond their department. Working to improve freshman placement in math courses, Roy, Joyce, and other CCT members have established strong relationships with the registrar's, student affairs, admission's office, and other STEM disciplines. These relationships have helped secure classroom space, place incoming students in appropriate classes, and advocate for resources. Joyce has found that:

When I have reached out to people, I found it to be, really supportive of innovation, really that there is a community of people to reach out to and that will kind of help with things, but there are definitely not structures to kind of create that cross-collaboration.

The value of establishing relationships within and beyond the department-level is the ability to leverage those relationships to support innovative teaching practices.

Internal collaborations also create positive teaching outcomes. Jane notes that through the CCT's work and the general culture of the institution, "I feel like there's more collaboration of faculty across departments within engineering than there used to be, which is a good thing." Internal unit collaboration is an important aspect of elevating teaching at Striving U, but for it to be maintained requires some mid-level and top-down support. The CCT group has done this with a level of success at the department and college levels. By building relationships with, asking for, and receiving visible support from the Dean of the College and the Department Chair for the integration of active learning strategies in introductory math courses, CCT members have the leverage to make changes to courses and faculty teaching approaches. The ability to sit down with colleagues to get work done is increasingly important in a post-striving environment when working on non-striving priorities. Yet, as noted above, with increased bureaucracy and limited authority, getting that work done becomes increasingly difficult. To bolster their efforts beyond relationships, participants noted the importance of advocating for teaching with data and an attention to mission.

Mission-Forward and Data-Informed Advocacy

Our findings indicate that change associated with non-striving priorities is more likely to occur when participants advocate for that change by tying it to organizational mission. Many participants noted the importance of connecting teaching to

the institutional mission of being an access-oriented and student-focused institution. Sally explains why it's important to both institutional identity and to the institution's bottom line:

Particularly in the next kind of 10-25 years, higher education institutions that don't figure out how to do education well, are gonna lose out...They're gonna realize that and so having people who are committed to good teaching and figuring out how to stay ahead of the game and do better and better teaching is crucial to the university's mission.

This is a goal for Striving U, but also a challenge. As Mary notes, “undergraduates are huge contributors to the development of [research] knowledge and that scholarship, and I think if we can build those connections a little bit more and really get people to think about their teaching and research not as separate.” Although she also sees the two roles moving in opposite directions, there is a value in keeping a connection between research and teaching efforts. The biggest barrier to change noted by participants is that because teaching has taken a back seat to research, efforts at supporting and promoting teaching efforts often take place in siloed institutional units. The local-nature of teaching related support and change at Striving U means it can sometimes be limited to specific departments.

To help change the siloing of teaching innovation and support, CCT members are using data to help inform their efforts and to advocate for resources, support, and adoption of active learning teaching approaches. In our research team's observations of CCT meetings, we witnessed Math faculty using data on course taking patterns, student progress and achievement, and enrollment data to not only help place students in appropriate courses. Roy explains that:

We have used our own internal data to begin examining the placement process and the effectiveness of our integrated precalculus/calculus courses. Information on the population and distinctions among student course taking patterns and persistence in intended majors is ongoing. All this was heavily impacted by the move to online courses.

By using data to convey the value of good teaching and by connecting teaching to organizational mission, participants were able to work with those within and beyond their departments to invest in active learning and other teaching practices to improve teaching and learning at the institution. This work requires a high-degree of advocacy and partnerships between faculty and administrators seeking to improve teaching in a striving environment.

Discussion

Many of the findings confirm what we already know about prestige-seeking institutions and align with our model for post-striving faculty work processes related to teaching. Among these are the increasing division between research faculty and teaching faculty and the reorientation of productivity measures toward prestige

seeking metrics, like research productivity. As Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2003) and O'Meara and Bloomgarden (2011) have noted, in striving institutions, rewards and incentives differ for research faculty and teaching faculty. Further, as Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) and O'Meara & Braskamp (2005) have also noted, in all institutions – regardless of striving status– service responsibilities disproportionately impact women and faculty of color. That is certainly the case at Striving U. Our findings affirm data from these prior studies and indicate that despite a decade passing, disparities still exist for support and demand related to faculty work at prestige-seeking institutions. The contribution shows how the influence of striving behaviors on faculty work and time remain, even after initial striving goals are met. In particular, the desire to maintain a new, prestigious status drives even more research oriented priorities, rewards, and incentives. As our participants described, while teaching was valued, the introduction of structures, priorities, and rewards for research in an effort to maintain Striving U's R1 status often pulled resources and attention from teaching priorities.

The increased bureaucracy that comes with a new status was a surprising finding. Faculty, regardless of teaching or research focus, found the increasing bureaucracy of Striving U limited their ability to effectively gain access to innovative teaching spaces. Moreover, because of the pull on time for all faculty, but especially research faculty, they also did not have the capacity or incentive to engage in training to access new learning spaces or to incorporate pedagogical innovations like active learning strategies. This finding aligns with work done by Austin (2011) related to the barrier of time as a hindrance to pedagogical change and to recent work by Klein et al. (2019), who found that innovative teaching technologies, like analytics data platforms, are often not adopted by faculty because of the pulls on their time.

Finally, while numerous studies have noted the role that relationships, data, and culture can play in organizational change, a notable contribution of this study is the role of grassroots-level collaboration and mission-based advocacy to improve support of teaching efforts. Kezar and Lester (2009, 2011) have noted that grassroots efforts and collaboration can be effective levers for organizational change and Klein (2017) has noted the importance of culturally-based advocacy efforts to bridge organizational differences. By leveraging relationships and advocating for teaching through data and mission oriented messaging, teaching faculty and advocates at Striving U have been able to circumvent the increased bureaucracy by reprioritizing teaching conversations in institutional work. Another related finding is that teaching faculty and advocates have been able to leverage new opportunities that have changed the ways in which historically marginalized faculty, like term faculty members, are able to play a larger or more influential role in their departments. This indicates that while striving can constrain resources and support for teaching, it can also spur creative thinking and action at the local level to create innovative practices to overcome those barriers.

Given these findings, there are concrete actions administrators and faculty can take to support teaching as it endeavors to achieve or maintain an R1 status. Although somewhat marginalized in prestige-seeking institutions, as our findings indicate, teaching is an important strategic lever for institutions. The need to attract undergraduate students has become important as institutions face an impending

enrollment crisis (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). Because institutions are increasingly reliant on undergraduate enrollment and tuition dollars, teaching should arguably be as much of a priority as research.

As such, beyond centers and spaces for teaching excellence, institutions should, as Striving U does, elevate teaching into their strategic plans. However, the elevation of teaching should also be visibly supported through the creation of a Vice Provost of Teaching Excellence, with similar power, influence, resources, and reporting lines of a Vice President of Research. Roy has argued for distinguished teaching professorships on either as rotating, temporary, or permanent designation at Striving U. These sorts of innovations can be put into place anywhere, not just at Striving U, to begin to create more balance across faculty roles and institutional priorities.

To bolster institutional efforts at recognizing the importance of teaching, not only to research and fiscal priorities, but as a co-equal endeavour, Asai (2020) and Cutucache and Salomone (2021) recently recommended the creation of a T1 (teaching one) designation similar to the R1 Carnegie Classification. The creation of new classifications is nothing new – Striving U benefitted from Carnegie’s creation of a new Community Engagement classification shortly after it received the R1. Creating a T1 designation would create the prestige and mechanisms for institutions to begin to value teaching work at the same level it values research.

For faculty, the use of course-based communities of transformation are a good place to begin to create grassroots-level change. These CCTs can help convene faculty with similar interests and disciplinary socialization (key levers for change) per Austin (2011) to begin to advocate for innovative teaching change. Further, those faculty and teaching advocates with strong relationships can leverage their social capital within and beyond their departments to advocate for and engender change.

Although this study investigates the impact of the post-striving environment on teaching and learning efforts throughout various levels at Striving U, we did not incorporate findings that were related to the COVID-imposed online environment. The COVID environment raises further questions about striving and post-striving environments. Further exploration of how COVID affected the striving environment should be conducted, including implications and consequences.

As higher education institutions continue to be under pressure to provide both quality education and high-level research, organizational tensions related to resources, time, and support will continue. For faculty and teaching advocates who want to ensure that teaching remains a priority, attention must be paid to faculty time, equitable workloads, and institutional bureaucracy and structures that inhibit innovation. Teaching and research are intricately connected and, when both are prioritized, create the opportunity for student, faculty, and institutional success.

Author Contribution All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Kathryn A. Fernández, Julie H. Shank, and Carrie Klein. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Kathryn A. Fernández, Julie H. Shank, and Carrie Klein, and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding Partial financial support was received from the National Science Foundation (DUE-1821589).

Data Availability All authors have ensured that all data support claims and comply with field standards.

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest/Competing Interests The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Ethics Approval The interview protocol and methodology for this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board committee of George Mason University (Ethics approval number: 1255309-10).

Consent to Participate The authors have received consent from each participant, per the approved Institutional Review Board consent forms and protocols.

Consent for Publication All participants have consented to publication, per the approved Institutional Review Board consent forms and protocols.

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