

The Presidential Problem-Stack Diagnostic

A FrameShift tool for naming what to solve first.

Every president inherits a stack of problems that arrive at once and compete for the same attention and the same dollars. The instinct is to work all of them. The discipline is to isolate the one that, solved first, makes the others smaller. What follows is a condensed version of the FrameShift diagnostic I run with presidents and cabinets — enough to surface the stack and begin to sequence it.

I. COMPLIANCE & FEDERAL EXPOSURE

- ☐ Do you know which of your programs are most exposed under Title IV and the new earnings-accountability framework?
- ☐ Has the federal shift now underway been translated into specific decisions, or is it still abstract?

II. RETENTION & COMPLETION

- ☐ Does your headline graduation rate hold up when disaggregated, or does a single number conceal very different outcomes for different students?
- ☐ Do you know where students actually leave, and which single intervention would move the rate most?

III. PROGRAM-TO-LABOR-MARKET ALIGNMENT

- ☐ Can each program name the occupations it leads to, and the regional demand and earnings behind them?
- ☐ Where is the institution silent on return on investment, and where is that silence costing enrollment?

IV. ENROLLMENT SUSTAINABILITY

- ☐ Is your enrollment trend, up or down, outrunning the capacity of your support systems to hold students?
- ☐ Do you know which programs drive net new enrollment and which simply absorb it?

V. REVENUE & FUNDING DIVERSIFICATION

- ☐ How dependent is the institution on a single revenue source, and what would a shock to it require?
- ☐ Does the board share a realistic read of the financial position, or a hopeful one?

VI. LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT

- ☐ Does your cabinet share one read of which problem comes first, or are divisions optimizing separately?
- ☐ When you name the top priority, does the team move, or negotiate?

WHAT YOUR ANSWERS MEAN

If you answered “no” or “not sure” to more than a few of these, the stack has not yet been isolated — and an institution that cannot name its first problem tends to fund all of them at once. The work is to sequence: one problem named, solved, and used to reduce the rest. FrameShift does this with your data, and hands the cabinet an agenda in priority order.

To run the full FrameShift diagnostic with your institution’s own data, and leave with a sequenced agenda your cabinet owns, reach me directly.